OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

RETOLD & ILLUSTRATED
BY
WILLIAM HOLE
R.S.A., R.E.

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OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

Retold and Illustrated by

WILLIAM HOLE, R.S.A., R.E.

With Preface by

The Very Rev. SIR GEORGE ADAM SMITH, LL.D.

Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Aberdeen University

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PREFACE

BY

The Very Rev. SIR GEORGE ADAM SMITH, LL.D.

Principal and Vice-Chancellor of Aberdeen University.

AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE HOLY LAND."

IT was a great privilege to contribute an Introduction to the eighty pictures of "The Life of Jesus of Nazareth," by my friend William Hole, when he asked it of me, and now that he is gone I feel it a sacred duty to introduce, as far as I can, this companion series of his pictures on the Old Testament. All lovers of the Bible will be grateful, for their children's sakes as well as for their own, that so fine an artist, so competent a master of the landscapes of the Holy Land and of the hardly altered figures, habits and crafts of its peoples, should have lived to fulfil thus much of the task, which his reverent spirit had piously set itself, of illustrating the whole of the sacred history recorded in the Bible.

In this second series of pictures there are evident the same originality and freshness of conception which marked the first—a freshness born, as I said of those, "not of mere skill, but of truth and reverence. It is as a common man of the land and time in which his subjects happened that the artist has drawn near to them—in the course of their happening, and before there had risen upon them that later light which, while it reveals their full significance in the purpose of God, not only dazzles our eyes to the actual shapes of their happening, but is apt to dispel the fresh, morning wonder of their entry into the world. The artist has striven to see and to show to us what in those great hours anyone with a keen eye might have seen of earth and air, of flowers and stones, of the faces and figures of men, and of the motion of crowds, but with a wonder at his heart which he was still unable, or forbore, to explain and define." No conventionalism or later symbolism distracts his honest effort to see, and to show us, the life of those ancient days move and throb, and gather and rush, or wear away and die, as much of it still does to-day under the same sun, moon and stars, and upon the same landscapes, or within the same narrow walls or more open tents.

The remoter epochs and the vastly larger stage, or stages, upon which Mr. Hole has had to work for these new pictures required an even greater strength of imagination than did the scenes of our Lord's Life. But I think it will be

agreed that his imagination has risen to this wider and more strenuous task. He proves that he has the historic eye, and gives us visions of the peoples and empires with which ancient Israel came into contact. And though in some of the present pictures we may miss the simplicity and reserve which charmed us throughout the Gospel series, we are aware of a development in his mastery of crowds and hosts, and in his marshalling of processions. We recognize that added to the quiet beauty in which he made to live before us the Holy Family or the small groups of disciples about Our Lord, or the children brought by their mothers to be blessed, there is in the art of William Hole force, energy, and the power of a wide sweep.

In the " Life of Our Lord " Mr. Hole was working on a little land, with which he had made himself very familiar in all its varied contrasts of field and desert, flowers and stones, bare rock and rank jungle, clear sun-baked spaces and gorges of deep darkness—*valleys*, indeed, *of the shadow of death*—with rural roads and villages and simple domestic interiors, but, beyond the national Temple and some small walled towns, with no great civil architecture or military fortifications. But to illustrate " Old Testament History " he has had to deal with the landscapes of other countries, some of which he had not visited, and with the vast architecture of rich empires. Yet, as will be admitted, his imagination of these is clear and accurate, and gives proof of how diligently he has read and how soundly he has learned of them. Witness the first picture of this series, the departure of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, and other renderings of Babylonian landscape and architecture—the River and its banks in The Captivity in Babylon (71), or the buildings and their backgrounds in Daniel before Nebuchadnezzar (72), and in Nehemiah making his petition to Artaxerxes (74). Or take the landscapes and buildings in the Egyptian scenes of the lives of Joseph and Moses : Judah Pleading before Joseph for Benjamin (9), The Meeting of Jacob and Joseph (10), Israelites Making Bricks in Egypt (11), Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh (13), and The Passover in Egypt (14). So far as I can judge, the details of architecture in these are carefully accurate; and in particular the soft colours with which Egyptian artists tinged their limestone walls are happily reproduced, especially upon the front of Pharaoh's palace, before which Moses and Aaron appear to that obdurate monarch.

I do not know whether Mr. Hole ever visited the peninsula of Sinai, yet the effects of his rendering of its mountains and valleys, whether in sunlight or with the thunder and lightning breaking over them, are extraordinarily impressive—see Moses and the Burning Bush (12), The Battle of Rephidim (16), The Giving of the Law (17), and Elijah on Horeb (55). I can certify to the fidelity with which he has reproduced the softer colours of the hills of the Negeb, and of Edom and Moab in The Report of the Spies and the Remonstrance of Caleb (19), The Consecration of Eleazar as High Priest (20), and Balaam Blessing Israel (21), the last with the thin line of the Jordan jungle threading the plain below the

violet hills of Western Palestine. We cannot but admire the skill which manages, within the narrow limits of all these pictures, to convey to us so full an impression of the majesty of those mountain ranges, their mass, towering uplift and far sweep.

Of the development of his power of massing crowds or of marshalling processions, and of rendering the richness of their varied colours, Mr. Hole has given evidence in his pictures of The Passage of the Red Sea (15), of The Passage of the Jordan (22), of David Bringing the Ark into Jerusalem (40), of The Dedication of the Temple (48), of the Queen of Sheba in the Presence of Solomon (50), of the Coronation of Joash (59), of the exit of her inhabitants on the Fall of Samaria (62), of Isaiah witnessing the vice and folly of Jerusalem (63), of the Assyrian army behind the Rabshakeh's Demand for the Surrender of Jerusalem (64), and of the Submission of Coniah to Nebuchadnezzar (69). In all these the vivid figures in the foregrounds throw back their vividness and their detail upon the vague lines or hosts of men in the backgrounds, and we clearly see these also. The wealth of colour is not only richly but delicately laid before us; and this is true also of a scene of another sort, the very fine conception and display of The Commerce of Solomon (49)—the gold, silver and ivory, the apes and peacocks, with the ships of Tarshish behind, and across the blue sea at Eziongeber the distant hills of Arabia.

But in this second series of pictures Mr. Hole had to cover not only a vaster range of space, but a far longer range of history than in his Life of Jesus; and his difficulty in selecting from it an adequate number of scenes and events to depict for us must have been correspondingly the greater. Of course, everyone will not be satisfied with the results of his selection. Some may regret that we have not from him more of those spiritual moments in the lives of the greater prophets, such as his skill and religious instinct were so fitted to give us, and did give us in the Life of the Greatest Prophet of all. Who better than Mr. Hole could have pictured for us the herdsman Amos, defying the priest of the royal chapel at Bethel, or Hosea learning from his own wrecked home the grief of God Himself over the apostasy of Israel, or Isaiah's call, or Isaiah mourning over the fickleness of Jerusalem, or Ezekiel sitting stunned beneath the appearance of the glory of the Lord in the storm-clouds above the river Chebar? And especially, what would have been more suited both to his knowledge of the land and of its seasons and to his religious sympathy than Jeremiah receiving assurance, for the prophetic message just put upon his lips by the Lord, from his vision of the almond blossom, the solitary pledge of the coming of spring on the wintry fields of Benjamin—a counterpart to Moses' vision of the Burning Bush? They may be excused who feel that for such spiritual moments we could well have spared some of the many scenes of battle, murder and sudden death which appear in this volume. Yet it will be replied, and justly, that if the artist was to be true to the whole atmosphere of the Old Testament, if he was to deliver

the full impression of Israel's stormy and troubled story, he had to reproduce, as he has done, the violent as well as the gentle throughout it, its hatreds as well as its loyalties, its passions as well as its pieties, the earthquakes, tempests and fires as well as the still, small voices of which it was composed. The material that he had to represent included not only those quiet groups, domestic interiors, and converse of soul with soul, to which the temper of his art and his religious sympathies inclined, and could bring forth into the faces he depicted so much spiritual expression, but also hosts of struggling men, scenes of oppression and panic, the walls of besieged cities and their capture and ruin in flames, with figures of terror and faces of despair, and the bodies of murdered men *strewn*, as Jeremiah says, *like sheaves left by the reaper and nobody gathers*. And all will admit that he has done so with dramatic power, with naturalness of movement and action among the figures engaged, and with accuracy of detail in their costumes and arms, as well as with accuracy of background and atmosphere.

There are in all some fifteen pictures of camps, battles, sieges, assaults and ruin of cities, of panic and rout, and of other moments of violence. The picture of The Battle of Rephidim (16) is true to the custom of desert warfare in this, that on the open space between the opposing hosts one sees the single champions advanced, whose duel is, among the Arabs, a usual preliminary to the general engagement of the tribes. The scene of Panic in the camp of Midian (27) before *the Sword of the Lord and Gideon* stirs with the sudden confusion produced, but, as in other pictures, gives us in the foreground a number of figures, clearly and distinctly painted, that enable us to realize the individuals of the struggling masses in the rear. We find other camp-scenes in that of David at Engedi (36), and in Saul's, by night, when David spared his life (37), on both of which see below; and in the deserted Syrian camp looted by the four lepers (57). In Jonathan defying the Philistine garrison (31) a fine reproduction is given of the rocks on the desert edge of the territory of Benjamin. In David and Goliath (35) the shepherd boy has already brought down with his sling the giant, and exults over him while the Philistines flee. In The Death of Saul at Gilboa (38) his hopeless battle is over, and the King and his gallant son, Jonathan—who, though he must have felt the futility of his desperate father's attempt, fought beside him to the end—lie on the stricken field together, *in their death not divided*. In that other hopeless battle of Megiddo, on the same fatal plain of Esdraelon, another King as rashly as Saul provoked encounter with superior forces and also fell—The Death of Josiah at Megiddo (67); but here the battle is still in fierce progress, and the clash of the two armies beneath the smoke of the burning neighbourhood is very forcibly but naturally rendered.

Of sieges and assaults the first depicted is that of The Destruction of Jericho (23), in which the artist has rightly added the human forces of the assaulting Israelites to the supernatural power of their trumpets. One shrinks, however, from the sight of the mother and infant hurled over the high walls of the city,

as one shrinks also from the sight of another picture—of Jezebel flung from the balcony of her palace (58). But Mr. Hole might reply that these violent episodes were characteristic of Old Testament history, and that the spirit of early Israel approved of the slaughter of even the women and the children of the heathen. They certainly do not express the artist's own sentiments. The Fall of Samaria (62), with the impalements of naked men, past which the horrified fugitives rush, reminds us of one of the customary features of the barbarous Assyrian warfare. And there is the lurid spectacle of the destruction of Jerusalem (70), which Mr. Hole has pictured for us so often in conditions so different by night and by day. Of more problematical realism is the assault of David's men-of-war on Jerusalem (39)—yet, however this actually took place, it is here most vividly and, perhaps, most probably rendered. Other scenes of violence are the slaughter of Agag by Samuel (32); The Death of Absalom (45), with its faces of terror against the beauty of the oaklands of Gilead; and the Murder of Zechariah (60). But all such scenes, as I have already said, are characteristic of much of the Old Testament story.

Not less characteristic are the even weirder scenes illustrative of the witchcraft and idolatry which never ceased as under-currents of the life of Israel, and frequently broke out to the surface, both in the domestic and in the national worship—The Sin of Witchcraft (65), a singularly powerful and fascinating study, and A Prophet denouncing Jeroboam (52), and the Cleansing the Land of Idols (66). Mr. Hole was right to remind us how persistently haunted Israel was in home and temple, both by ghosts and by the fascination of brutal, ugly idols.

More or less conjectural, of course, is much of the Israelite architecture depicted: for example, that in Samuel Anointing David (33); or that in David playing to Saul (34), for which one remembers the more probable setting of the tent in Browning's "Saul"; or the architecture of David's House (41, 42), and of the Temple at its Dedication (48) and of Solomon's Palace (50, 51, 59); likewise the composition of Uzziah's Engines of War (61). Yet in all these and in others, there is much that is faithful to the data both of the Biblical descriptions of the buildings in question and of the discovered remains of Egyptian and Phœnician civilizations, while, as far as I can see, there is nothing that violates those data. Still more clearly sure are the details in the Rebuilding of Jerusalem (75), a life-like and convincing scene. Very probable also is the structure of the inn in Joseph's Brethren examining their sacks (8), and that of the open portico or gallery, with its trailing plants, in which Joshua receives the submission of the Gibeonites (24), unless here again a tent were more probable, and that of Jezebel's House or Palace (58). With these conceptions of the architecture, we may take the interesting and attractive view given us of one of the least changing of the crafts of the Orient in the weaving of the curtains of the Tabernacle (18); and for the substance of this there is authority in the text of Scripture.

Nor should we overlook the discrimination by Mr. Hole—occasional but adequate, and perhaps all that was possible—of ethnological differences in the characters he has painted for us; for example, the Philistine features of the woman urging her child to mock at Samson in prison (28), true to the Philistine physiognomy on Egyptian bas-reliefs, and the Assyrian face of the Rabshakeh calling on Jerusalem to surrender (64).

But let us turn again to that which of all the material contents of the history illustrated by our artist is the most abiding, of which there is constant proof that he loved it the most dearly, and which he has rendered for us with a fidelity and with a spirit excelled, as far as I know, by no other painter—the Holy Land itself in its unchanging atmosphere, lights and shades, and landscapes by day and by night. Throughout his presentation of all these in this series there is the same truth, the same natural charm, the same mastery of the many varieties and contrasts, with which the " Least of all Lands " surprises the pilgrim, as drew out our hearts to the sympathy and skill of Mr. Hole's treatment of them in his " Life of our Lord." For proof of this take his pictures of the ordinary fields of Palestine, already *white unto the harvest* in their setting of green olive-trees, as in Boaz and Ruth (29); or the pasturelands and the blue hills beyond, as in the selling of Joseph to the Midianites (7), with the striking marks of accurate detail in the grooves on the soft limestone lips of the well, worn by the ropes that for years and years have been drawing up the heavy buckets from below; or in Jael and Sisera (26) the tent and trees as these were to be seen not many years ago on that same still Arab-haunted plain; or the views from Mount Carmel in Elijah's Sacrifice (54), and from the Syrian camp (57); or the cliffs of Michmash in Jonathan defying the Philistines (31); or the oak-shadowed hill-paths of Gilead in The Death of Absalom (45); or the grey and tawny shades of the stone in old walls and troughs, as in the meeting of Eliezer and Rebekah (4); or the accuracy and naturalness of the backgrounds to the various scenes selected from the history of Jerusalem : David's purchase of the Threshing-floor of Araunah (46), The Rabshakeh Demanding the Surrender of Jerusalem (64), Coniah's submission to Nebuchadnezzar (69), and the Return of the Exiles (73); although it is very probable that the environs of Jerusalem were anciently far more wooded than they now present themselves to the artist's eye. As in his first series, in the scenes of our Lord's Baptism, of the Descent of the Spirit upon Him, and His talks with His earliest Disciples, Mr. Hole again proves himself a master of those close contrasts of desert and jungle, which the Jordan Valley yields—The Passage of Jordan (22). And there are the scenes in which the soft green shades of many a Palestine night are exquisitely rendered : as over Gilead in Jacob at Peniel (6), and over Judah in Saul's Camp (37). Finest of all to my eye, for I once stayed there for two days and know it well, is the picture of that wonderful oasis on the western deserts of the Dead Sea, David at Engedi (36). Looking at the picture I seem to live again in the reality.

The selection made by Mr. Hole from the almost countless number of spiritual and ethical occasions offered him by Old Testament history is fairly representative of the whole. To some extent the selection follows the line of the instances and examples of faith laid down in the Eleventh Chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, but leaves out all before Abraham. Then we start with his *going out* from Ur of the Chaldees (1), *not knowing whither he went*, his *sojourn in the Land of Promise, dwelling in tents*, with the promise of a son to him and Sarah (2) and the test of his faith by the call to offer up his son (3). Then come Isaac and Jacob *the heirs of promise*, with the despairing Esau's demand of a blessing from his father (5), and Jacob's wrestle in the night at Peniel on the Jabbok (6)—one of those several scenes into which Mr. Hole has put his power of impressing us with the solitude of a man's highest spiritual efforts and agonies. Then in another of the same we have Moses having *forsaken Egypt* and *enduring as seeing Him Who is Invisible* (12); and then, still following Hebrews Eleventh, the Israelites *by faith keeping the Passover and the Sprinkling of Blood* (14), and *by faith passing through the Red Sea* (15). Then Mr. Hole introduces the sustenance of the people's courage against their enemies by Moses' arms raised in blessing—the Battle of Rephidim (16)—and The Giving of the Law (17) as well as Caleb's faith in his Remonstrance against the Cowardice of the Spies (19), and the instance in Balaam (21) of an unwilling, reluctant and compelled faith; and again, one of those happy moments in the progress of the people to a more ordered and merciful sense of justice in the City of Refuge (25). To the list in Hebrews he returns with the Siege of Jericho (23), *by faith the walls of Jericho fell down*, but adds (as has been said already) the force of arms inspired by faith to the supernatural effect of the trumpets. Mr. Hole gives us neither Rahab nor Barak, nor Jephthah, all recorded in Hebrews, but with that epistle he includes Gideon, or at least the rout by Gideon's little faithful band of vastly superior forces (27), and Samson in Prison (28), an original conception of a frequently rendered scene.

So we come to *David, Samuel and the Prophets*. First to Eli and the child Samuel (30), a gracious study of age listening to the lips of childhood, though perhaps it would have been more true to picture a somewhat older boy, already (as he was) minister in the Sanctuary, the Hebrew word translated *child* covering both boyhood and youth; and then, as if to remind us from what rude forms the faith and the conscience of Israel had slowly to emerge, we have Samuel slaying Agag before the Lord (32). Of the Prophets after Samuel we see Nathan denouncing the Sin of David (41), followed by the Sorrow of David (42)—in which the artist, by painting an attendant standing on the carpet with his sandals still on his feet, seems to have intended to signify the distraction into which the Palace was thrown through the King's grief. We see a Prophet denouncing the idolatry of Jeroboam (52), Elijah putting Baal to shame by his sacrifice on Mount Carmel (54), and denouncing the guilty Ahab (53), Isaiah nursing his

indignation at the vice and folly of Jerusalem (63), and Jeremiah and the Potter (68). The last incident and the oracle that it drew from Jeremiah are often misinterpreted as a declaration of the unchangeableness of the Almighty's decrees of predestination, whereas what they do illustrate and enforce is God's freedom to alter the destinies He has prepared for men, who are as clay in His hands, when He finds them intractable to His purpose.

Throughout these pictures we have not only in each the skilful and dramatic grouping of a few figures, and the expression of the individuality of the persons introduced, in welcome contrast to the monotony of feature and expression which depresses so many of the orthodox illustrations of Scripture; but taken as a whole the pictures do represent that steady line of faith through the history of Israel drawn for us by the Eleventh of Hebrews, a growing and a progressive faith, with the gradual development of religion and the moral sense from very primitive forms and the emergence of an intelligent and a humane system of justice out of barbarous and cruel customs. Yes—to return to a question that we started earlier—Yes! Mr. Hole, if he was to be true to the full and forward range of the Book, could not but include in his illustrations of this the violent and the savage elements in it, as well as the spiritual efforts by which these were gradually left behind, and the ethical and religious glories thereby attained. Not otherwise could he have revealed the power of the Guiding Hand and of the Spirit of Him Who said, *Behold, I make all things new.*

GEORGE ADAM SMITH.

INTRODUCTION

AT a period which may roughly be stated as 2000 B.C. the dominion of the civilized world as known to History was divided between the Empires of Chaldea and Egypt, occupying respectively the basins of the Euphrates and the Nile, their spheres of influence separated by the deserts of Arabia, and their connecting link being the debatable and sparsely inhabited coastland and hill country called Canaan, which, together with Phœnicia, formed the eastern limit of the Great Sea.

The Chaldeans, a mixed race of Semitic and Turanian stock, had attained a high degree of civilization. Their monuments and libraries are still extant in evidence of Chaldean advance in Art, Science, Literature, and Commercial Enterprise. Well versed were they, also, in the art of War, a knowledge they had frequent opportunity of exercising in repelling the raids and incursions of desert tribes, and especially those of their hereditary enemies, the fierce and predatory Kings of Elam, who were a perpetual menace on the north-east to the wealthy inhabitants of Lower Babylonia. This menace at last culminated in actual invasion : and at the time of which we are speaking, the King of Elam had succeeded in establishing temporary sovereignty over Chaldea and its tributary cities in Canaan, and the Arabah, as it is called, the district to the south of the Dead Sea. A similar shock had been administered about a hundred years previously to the stability of the Egyptian Empire, whose power had never before been seriously challenged, by an inundation of semi-barbarians, probably the surplus population of Northern Arabia, which bore down the resistance of the over-refined and decadent civilization of the fourteenth Dynasty.

These " Hyksos," as they are known to History, or the Shepherd Kings, established themselves in the Delta of the Nile, while the native Sovereigns retreated southwards, and transferred their capital from Memphis to Thebes in Upper Egypt.

The religion of both Chaldea and Egypt was a complicated worship of many gods—into which it had gradually changed from the Monotheism of earlier times when population was sparse and nomadic, and when its unit was the family or clan, under the supposed protection and guidance of its tribal deity.

Gradually as these sects increased in number, they drew together for mutual protection and built cities—centres of City States, as they are called—which may be regarded as the first step in progressive civilization. Each of these little states owed allegiance to its own particular local god, whose power was estimated and respected according to his success or failure to further the interests of his people.

When war broke out, and one state increased its territory at the expense of its neighbours, the power of the local deities was by no means ignored, and success was not felt to be assured without the reverent transference of the images, pillars, or other objects which were believed to be their dwelling-places. The enmity of the stranger gods was appeased and their favour invoked by religious rites and sacrifices, by the erection of temples in their honour, and by their inclusion in the theocracy of the victorious state.

The Semitic gods were for the most part impersonations of the powers of Nature, and as such their influence was regarded as beneficent and even paternal. They were supposed to recognize and reward virtue, and to punish the grosser infringement of the prevailing standard of morality: but this standard was low, reflecting that merely of primitive times and primitive people, and, in consequence, the worship of these gods and goddesses, and the rites with which this was celebrated, had a deteriorating influence with abundant elements of still further corruption.

Such in brief outline were the civil and religious conditions at the time chosen by the Almighty for the birth of the Hebrew Nation, a nation unique in the History of the World—not from the extent of its dominion, which at no time exceeded that of Wales; nor from its military, commercial, or political importance, which, except in the opinion of its own writers, was little more than negligible, even at the culmination of such strength as it ever attained; but because it pleased God to elect this race to be His own, special, and peculiar people.

They did little to earn this distinction by superiority to their neighbours in the way of righteousness, for in spite of spiritual privileges, they ever proved themselves a perverse and stiff-necked people. Nevertheless, they were God's instrument, the Channel for the Revelation of Himself to a world which, by the light of nature only, could not know God.

And the annals of this people were as strange and unique as was the race itself. Never before or since has a nation's history been recorded from a purely

spiritual and immaterial point of view. In this marvellous library of books which we call the Old Testament, material of all sorts has been sought for, selected, and utilized, by the unknown editors of the Scriptures, with the single-minded purpose of showing forth the dealings of Jehovah with the Hebrew nation, and of its slow and gradual enlightenment during a period of 1,600 years.

The stores of oral and written tradition and Court records have been laid under contribution; folk song, collections of proverbs and psalms, ethical literature, and legal enactments have contributed their share; even prehistoric legend has been closely studied, and the precious metal of underlying spiritual truth recognized and extracted from the apparently unpromising ore. On the other hand, details, such as the modern historian looks for eagerly and fails to find, are either totally ignored, as having nothing to do with the matter in hand, or briefly dismissed, by a reference to some contemporary and secular chronicle which the reader of the Scriptures may search, if he is so inclined. The inspired writers were particular to note whether, and in what way, such and such a king did well or evil in the sight of the Lord, but as for the rest of his acts, the wars that he waged, and the cities that he built, are these not written in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel or Judah?

OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

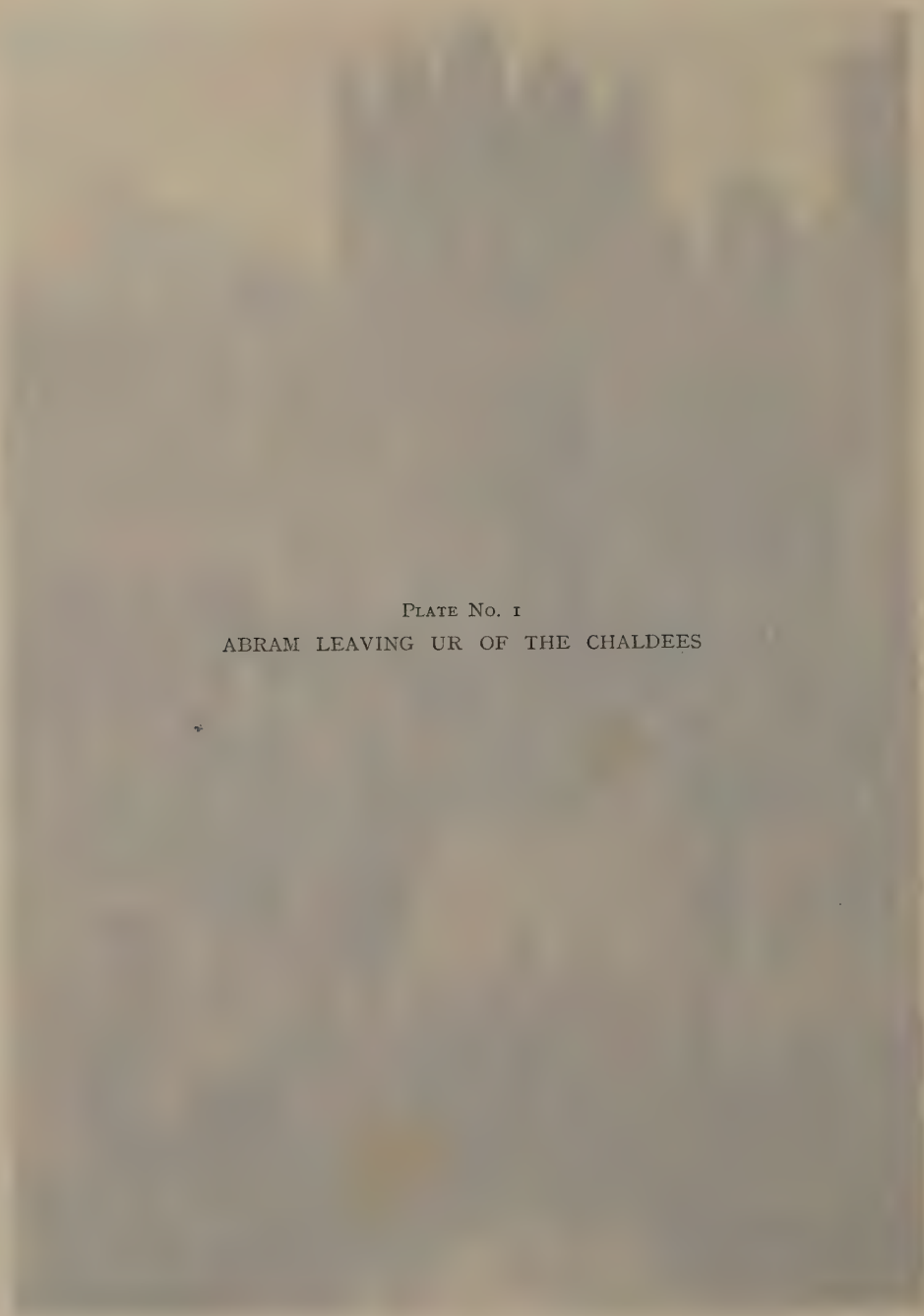


Plate No. 1

ABRAM LEAVING UR OF THE CHALDEES

OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

Retold and Illustrated by WILLIAM HOLE, R.S.A., R.E.

I

THE MIGRATION OF ABRAM FROM CHALDEA TO CANAAN

AND Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. (*Gen.* xi. 31.) (*Plate* 1.)

In these few words the Scriptures record the first act in the drama of a Nation's birth. The historian does not concern himself or his readers with immediate causes. He attributes all simply to the command of God, and it is left for us to surmise that the separation of the family of Terah the Chaldee from their home in the City of Ur may have been due to political disturbance and the pressure of population incident to the Elamite invasion, rather than to religious impulse, seeing that the first stage of the emigration to Canaan was only from the Southern to the Northern Sanctuary of Sin, the moon-god, at Haran, where the family remained until the death of Terah.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (*Gen.* xii. 1–3.)

Not until the death of his father Terah was Abram free to obey the Divine monition, and to proceed onwards with his wife Sarai and Lot his brother's son with their flocks and herds into the land of his adoption—the land of promise.

In the upland pastures of Canaan, Abram pitched his tent, finding in these solitudes his long-sought opportunity for contemplation. There he meditated on the revelations of Divine purpose from time to time accorded to him, and

there he achieved, in a degree unattained by his immediate successors, a conception of the character of the Almighty destined to be the basis of the belief of future generations.

Yet this emancipation of spiritual thought was gradual. Not immediately, but by slow degrees, did the God of Abram reveal Himself to His servant as One essentially differing from all others in that He was a God of Righteousness and Justice transcending that of humanity, and to be worshipped with the free-will offering of implicit trust and faith.

Time was not ripe for further development. The idea had not yet dawned, and indeed it was long in coming, that "El Shaddai," the Almighty, the name by which He was known to the Patriarchs, was a title of universal, and not merely of local or national application; and that He is, in very truth, the One and only God.

Nor were any distinctive religious rites instituted in His honour; that of circumcision being simply the consecration, with sacramental significance. of an already existing custom.

The pillars and groves so unsparingly denounced as idolatrous in subsequent times, continued to be erected and planted in honour of the Almighty, as they had been of old to other gods.

The subsequent narrative of the lives of the Patriarchs abounds in vividly-drawn pictures of nomadic life in Palestine, strikingly illustrative of the manners and customs of the people of the land even at the present day.

We trace the journeyings of Abram towards the south in search of pasture for his flocks and herds. At every halting-place he builds an altar and calls upon the Name of the Lord, and he receives confirmation of The Promise regarding the destiny and inheritance of his race.

On one occasion, when rain failed, he was forced to flee into Egypt in order to save part, at least, of his live stock. There he was received with honour by the Hykso king, who doubtless acknowledged the claim of kindred, and there, by a grievous lapse of moral courage under threat of danger, he showed that his faith was not yet perfected.

From Egypt Abram and Lot returned to that place eastward of Beth-el where at the first he had erected an altar. Increased wealth in cattle, and consequent insufficiency of water, had caused dissension between the kinsmen's herdsmen and shepherds. "The land was not able to bear them." It was necessary that they should part, and Abram courteously gave his nephew the choice of remaining where he was or of removing elsewhere.

The spot where they stood, at the edge of the precipitous slopes and ravines that enclose the Jordan valley, commanded a wide and extensive prospect of fertile country, watered, as it is written, "as the garden of the

[illegible] land of [illegible] and [illegible]

[illegible] king advantage of dynastic change in the north, [illegible] in" chose this time to sha[illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] ess, bidding [illegible]

[illegible] her advanced [illegible] as that of the [illegible] Eastern compliment and good wish: [illegible] (*Plate* [illegible]

[illegible] seem to fall away as we read the [illegible], so [illegible] of the dignified [illegible] and simple [illegible] of an Arab chief.

At this time Abraham, as he was now [illegible], was told that the cup of the

This phrase indicates the wealth and civilization of the inhabitants [illegible]

[illegible]

PLATE NO 2
SARAI OVERHEARING THE RENEWAL OF
THE PROMISE

Lord, like the land of Egypt,"* and "Lot chose the plain of Jordan," to his bitter cost, "and pitched his tent toward Sodom," heedless of the vile repute of its inhabitants.

Taking advantage of dynastic change in the north, the confederate "Cities of the plain" chose this time to shake off their allegiance to Babylon, but the Elamite king, with several of his tributary chieftains,† organized a punitive expedition which swept the borderland of the Dead Sea, overthrew the confederated rebel kings in the vale of Siddim and, having spoiled the cities, "took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed."

Abram, who was now living near Hebron, was no mere visionary. With the mental endowment of a seer he combined that technical skill in his business, and could prove himself on occasion a capable soldier, able to defend as well as to acquire his wealth. He swiftly armed his servants, three hundred in number, summoned his allies, the sheikhs of Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner, and started in pursuit of the Elamite spoilers. These he overtook somewhere about the headwaters of the Jordan, and by skilful disposition of his little force, and the element of surprise in a night attack, Abram obtained a signal victory, recovering prisoners and spoil, and releasing his nephew.

On his return Abram was met by the priest-king of Salem, whom he recognized as a fellow seeker and worshipper of the Most High God. To this man he offered tithes of his goods and from him he accepted a blessing.

With the king of Sodom, however, he would have no dealings; he rejected overtures of friendship and refused to accept reward for his services, bidding him share this with his allies the sheikhs of Hebron.

Following on this narrative it is stated that the Almighty appeared to Abram at the door of his tent at Mamre in the assumed form of three travellers, for the purpose of renewing and confirming the Divine Covenant, that to the seed of Abram should be given the land of Canaan and that the repeated promise of an heir to the childless man was about to be fulfilled. Sarai, engaged in hospitable cares, overheard the conversation and smiled when she remembered her advanced age and that of her husband, estimating the value of the promise as that of the customary Eastern compliment and good wish; for which levity she received a gentle rebuke. (*Plate* 2.)

Intervening years seem to fall away as we read the story, so descriptive as it is of the dignified courtesy and simple hospitality of an Arab chief.

At this time Abraham, as he was now called, was told that the cup of the

* This phrase indicates the wealth and civilization of the inhabitants of the plain, and that their Babylonian overlord had not neglected this outlying part of his dominions. Engineers skilled in irrigation must have been at work to utilize the water supply which, without such guidance, runs to waste, leaving the land desert, as it was under the rule of the Turks.

† One of these (Amraphel) was afterwards known to fame as Hammurabi, King of Babylon.

iniquity of the cities of the Plain was full and that their destruction was decreed. But God's mercy is great and He listened to the earnest pleading of His servant that He would not destroy the righteous with the wicked, but would even spare these should fifty—yea, even ten righteous men be found among them.

Early in the morning, with dread and great misgiving, Abraham gat him up to the place of intercession and looked toward Sodom, " and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace "; the billows of lurid vapour that shrouded the eastern horizon as with a pall, proclaiming the doom of the cities which had perished in their iniquity. None had survived to tell the tale of that night save only three—Lot, and his two daughters, and they, poor fugitives, henceforth homeless, destitute, outcast, and cave-dwellers.

II

ISAAC AND REBEKAH

IN due time Isaac* was born, the son of [illegible]
comment on the events of [illegible]
with the [illegible]

[illegible] in ordinary sacrifice, which costs him little, any [illegible] the feeling of [illegible]

PLATE No. 3
ABRAHAM AND ISAAC AT MOUNT MORIAH

* Isaac: Son of Laughter.

Plate No. 3
ABRAHAM AND ISAAC AT MOUNT
MORIAH

II

ISAAC AND REBEKAH

IN due time Isaac * was born, the son of rejoicing, and, omitting comment on the events of intervening years, we are presented with the culminating act in the spiritual life of Abraham. So exquisitely described is this, so full of significance, that it must be studied in its entirety, fully to apprehend its perpetual message.

Abraham fails to find in ordinary sacrifice, which costs him little, any adequate expression of the feeling of adoration that wells within his heart in contemplating the Divine attributes of the Almighty. Not as an act of propitiation, therefore, as did his forefathers, but by an irresistible impulse of devotion which he reads as the very voice of God Himself, he will make offering of that which he values most—the life, dearer than his own, of his only son.

We see the little procession wending its way from Beersheba, the aged patriarch riding in advance wrapt in thought, with Isaac at his side; and behind them their armed attendants, concerned not at all with the object of the journey. Arrived at the appointed place, father and son together ascend the heights of sacrifice, Isaac bearing his burden, the wood for the burnt offering, while the young men tarry below, in their own place—with the ass. The lad submits unquestioningly while with trembling hands his father adjusts the bonds, and obedient even unto death, lays him down upon the altar they had built together. "And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son."

God suffered him to proceed thus far, welcoming and accepting the impulse of true devotion and the spirit of sacrifice thus made manifest, however erroneous its expression; and then He announced in unmistakable terms, and for all ages, that the sacrifice of human life could find no place in the worship of an Almighty and most merciful Father. At the same time, and as a reward for such faith as was to be an example for ever to mankind, God ratified His promise, not only of material prosperity to the seed of Abraham, but of spiritual blessing to all nations of the earth through him. (*Plate* 3.)

And Sarah died at Hebron, and was buried in the Cave of Machpelah, which Abraham bought of Ephron the Hittite for a family sepulchre, the purchase being

* Literally, Son of Laughter.

made in the city gate, and ratified with all due formality of witnesses and interchange of stately compliment.

Abraham was profoundly concerned for the future of his race, lest the purity of the Faith he had acquired should be defiled by the paganism of his Canaanite neighbours; and having heard that his brother Nahor, who still dwelt in Mesopotamia, had been blessed with a numerous family, he summoned Eliezer, the steward of his household, and charged him with the mission to proceed without delay to his brother's house and to bring thence if possible a wife for his son Isaac.

An upright and righteous man, the steward proved himself worthy of the trust reposed in him. Nor did he forget the first preliminary of success. He prayed unto the God of Abraham for a blessing upon the choice he was about to make, indicating the sign by which he asked God to grant him guidance.

Arrived at its destination, the caravan halted at a well outside the city, whither the women came to draw water at eventide. And there came forth a damsel, fair to look upon, Rebekah the granddaughter of Nahor, who went down to the well and returned, having filled her pitcher. Eliezer approached and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water from thy pitcher. And she said, Drink, my Lord, and when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also. . . . And she hasted and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. (*Gen.* xxiv. 17-20.)

Filled with hope by these words, the very sign he had asked of the Lord, Eliezer desired to know her name, which she told, offering him at the same time ready hospitality in the name of her father Bethuel. Then the man bowed his head and worshipped the Lord with thanksgiving; and he gave her from the betrothal gift a golden face-jewel, and placed on her wrists bracelets of gold. (*Plate* 4.) Rebekah hastened home to relate what had occurred, and Laban, her brother, came to Eliezer and said, " Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house and room for the camels."

That evening Eliezer related the object of his journey and the Divine guidance by which he had been favoured.

Though they pleaded for delay, Bethuel and Laban readily accepted the proposed alliance with their kinsman. They blessed Rebekah and entrusted her, with her nurse and attendants, to the care of Eliezer, who forthwith started on the toilsome homeward journey of five hundred miles and upwards.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide; and he lifted up his eyes and behold the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she vailed herself and lighted off the camel. . . . And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent and took Rebekah, and she became his wife. (*Gen.* xxiv. 63–67.)

It is recorded that Abraham lived for thirty-five years after the marriage of

PLATE NO. 4
ELIEZER AND REBEKAH

his son; and that he died full of years and of honour, and was buried by his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, who laid him by the side of Sarah, his wife, in the cave of Machpelah.

Thus died Abraham, the Father of the Faithful and the forerunner of the Prophets, " a type," as he has been well described by a modern writer, " of the highest point to which the genius of his race is capable of attaining."

Isaac, his son, was a man of very different calibre. Upright and blameless, he was evidently without marked individuality or force of character, as seems to have been recognized by his father, when he entrusted him, even at the age of forty, to the guardianship of Eliezer. In the history of the Patriarchs Isaac serves but as a link between Abraham and Jacob, and a channel through whom to carry on the Divine knowledge in which he had been so carefully instructed. We are apt to think of him chiefly as a victim—in his youth of the exalted religious enthusiasm of his father, and again in his helpless old age, of a designing wife and a treacherous son.

III

JACOB AND ESAU

THE two sons of Isaac, though twin-born, were men of widely contrasted character. The elder, Esau, was an easy-going careless worldling, reckless, impulsive either for good or evil, the servant of mood, not of principle. Jacob, the younger, on the other hand, impersonated all the least admirable characteristics of his race. His guiding principle, in early life at least, was keen self-interest, which he pursued unhindered by scruples either of honesty, loyalty, or truth; making subtlety serve when courage was lacking. Yet withal we find in this man indications of exalted spiritual aspiration and insight not unworthy of a son of Abraham. He coveted spiritual blessings as passionately as he strove for material advantage, though the service of God was rarely recognized as a deterrent in the pursuit of Mammon, and he would even venture sometimes to import the spirit of bargaining into his very prayers. And, in thinking of Jacob, let it be remembered to his credit, that he was a faithful and devoted lover.

The last recorded scene in the life of Isaac is tragic and pathetic, and is described with admirable feeling by the narrator. Isaac, conscious of increasing infirmities and of his approaching end, summons his favourite son Esau and instructs him to prepare and bring him a dish of savoury venison such as he loved, that he may eat it and bless him before his death. Rebekah from behind the harem curtains of the tent overheard these commands, and determined to secure if possible for Jacob that paternal blessing, which was esteemed a boon of no less value than that Birthright of which Jacob had already succeeded in depriving his brother.

The despicable plot succeeded, and the credulous old man had just bestowed the coveted blessing on the "Supplantor"—who lost no time in retiring, as we may well believe—when Esau returned from the chase, having also prepared his dish of savoury meat. No effort of imagination is necessary to picture the dawning consciousness of deception—the agony of irrevocable loss. The scene is recorded in words that bear the impress of truth. (*Plate* 5.)

But the wrath of Esau was not a matter to be ignored. Rumours of his threats of vengeance had reached his mother's ears, and she hastened to urge on Jacob the need of temporary separation from his family, not only for his personal safety's sake but for that also of the purity of the race and religion, lest Jacob should take a wife of the daughters of the Hittites, the people of the land. And Isaac called Jacob and charged him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the

PLATE No. 5
THE DESPAIR OF ESAU

daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. And God Almighty give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham. And Isaac sent away Jacob, and he went unto Padan-aram. (*Gen.* xxviii. 1–5.)

And as he went on his way, Jacob came to the little rocky plain of Beth-el, surrounded by an amphitheatre of the naturally terraced hills so characteristic of this district, and there having pitched his camp, he took one of the smooth stones for a pillow and laid him down to sleep.

And behold! In the visions of the night, the terraced hills became as it were a mighty staircase leading upward to Heaven, the spirit forms of Divine messengers ascending and descending upon it; and over all stood One Whom Jacob knew to be the God of Abraham and of Isaac, and Who in gracious words announced that He was his God also, ready to keep him in all his ways and to protect him whithersoever he went until he and his seed should return to the place of his promised inheritance.

In the morning when he awoke Jacob recognized that he had been the recipient of a new Revelation. The power of the Almighty was unrestricted by space or distance; not as was that of the gods whom his fathers of old had worshipped "beyond the flood." And Jacob said, "Surely the Lord is in *this* place; and I knew it not! This is none other than the house of God, the Gate of Heaven." (*Gen.* xxviii. 16–17.)

Then, following the ritual of an earlier epoch which had not yet been changed, he took the stone which he had used for a pillow and erected it as the altar of an "Ashera," or dwelling-place for his God, and poured upon its summit a libation of oil.

Arrived at his journey's end he received a ready welcome from his uncle Laban, who, however, took prompt advantage of the fact that Jacob had fallen in love at first sight with his cousin Rachel, in order to make a shrewd bargain with him as to service and wages. He cheated him of his bride after the service of seven years agreed upon, by substituting her less attractive sister Leah, and he made Jacob serve still another seven years in payment for Rachel. The two men were fairly matched in cunning. Circumstances at first favoured Laban, but this disadvantage was speedily balanced by the superior skill of Jacob as a sheep breeder, so that in the course of years his wealth in flocks and herds had so increased as to excite the jealousy of his kinsman.

Dreading the consequences of a quarrel which seemed otherwise inevitable, Jacob took advantage of the opportunity presented by the distance apart of the grazing grounds, to depart in haste to Canaan, trusting to get so far on the way that pursuit might be hopeless.

Laban's anger on hearing of the flight was not decreased by the discovery that someone had stolen his household deities, or teraphim, and following in hot pursuit he overtook the fugitives at Mahanaim in Gilead. Then followed fierce mutual recriminations in which, fortunately, the disputants were able to expend their anger, and they finally agreed to a covenant of peace which was ratified according to custom by the erection of a cairn, upon which they ate and drank together in friendship; and also of a stone pillar which witnessed their oath that neither branch of the family would henceforth pass that way with intent to do injury to the other.* And Laban called the place Mizpah; for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent the one from the other. (*Gen.* xxxi. 49.)

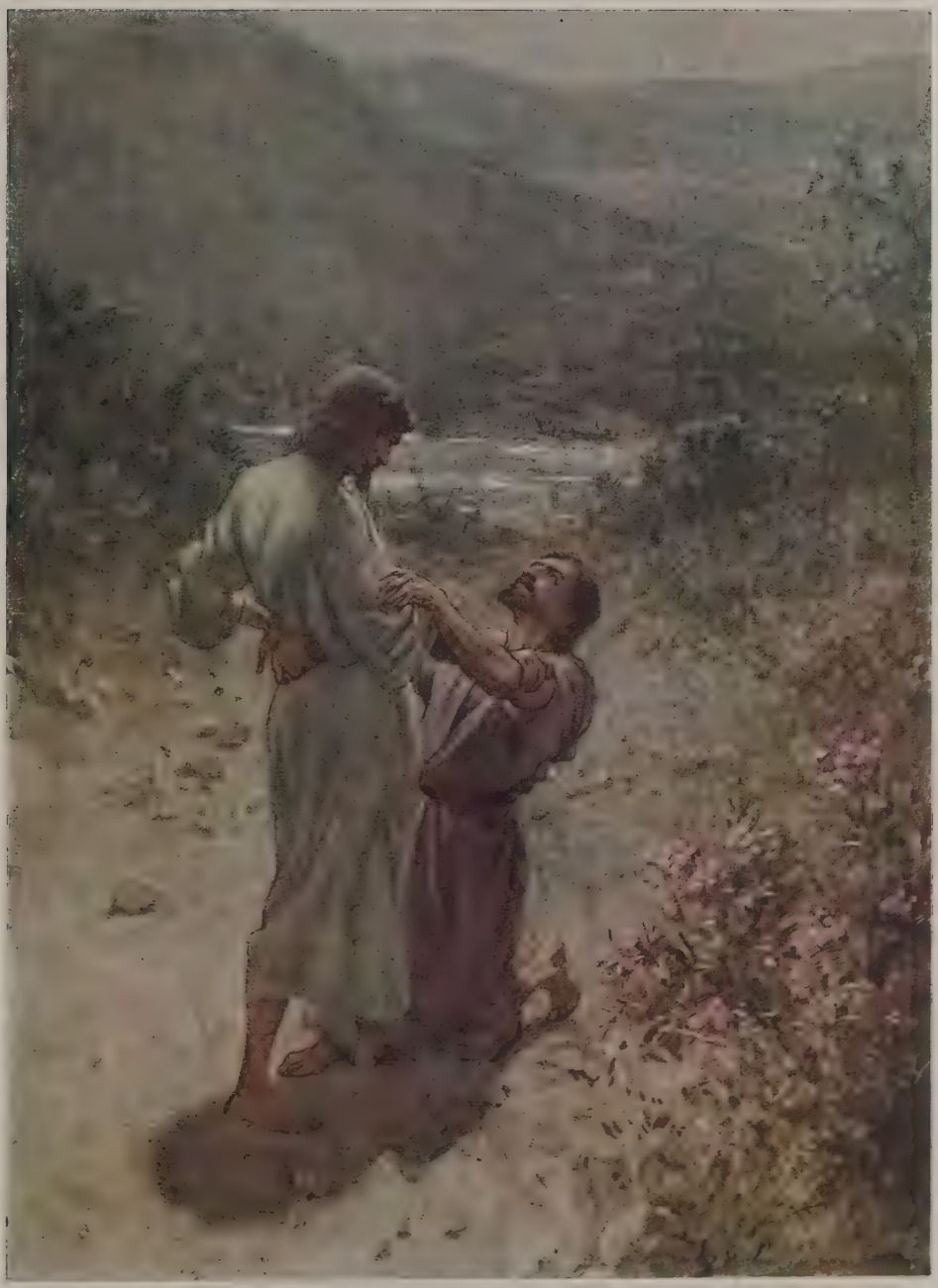
Jacob now stood on the borders of Canaan, in justifiable doubt as to whether it would be prudent to proceed farther until he had ascertained the temper of that brother whom he had so deeply injured in days gone by. Esau was now a powerful tribal chieftain dwelling in the district of Seir, or Edom, to the south of the Dead Sea, and he might or might not be biding his time for vengeance. After much searching of heart doubtless, Jacob sent messengers to Edom, and he commanded them saying, thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban and stayed there until now. And I have oxen and asses, flocks and menservants and womenservants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight. And the messengers returned to Jacob saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and he also cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. And Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed (*Gen.* xxxii. 3–7), and prayed unto the Lord for protection against his brother. He then prepared and sent what he intended for a propitiatory present of great value in flocks and herds, camels and asses, and having marshalled his household of two wives and two womenservants—each with their respective sons—eleven in all, and having escorted them over the ford of Jabbok, he returned to the hither side by himself and wrestled all night in an agony of prayer with God.

There is a little field at Peniel forming the floor of an amphitheatre where the encircling hills sweep back from the river's brim, and the traveller pauses, for here, surely, and nowhere else, must that mysterious encounter have taken place when Jacob proved the latent force of his spiritual courage; and where his name was changed to Israel in token that, as a Prince, he had power with God and men, and had prevailed. (*Plate* 6.)

Whether or not Esau's wrath had been turned away by Jacob's "effectual

* Such stones and cairns of witness may be seen to this day in Palestine. At one spot, south of Beth-el, where Jerusalem first comes within sight of pilgrims from the north, the ground has at times been covered with these, varying in size, according to the importance of the issue, from a few inches to several feet.

PLATE No. 6
JACOB AND THE ANGEL AT PENIEL



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fervent prayer," we cannot tell, but on the following day he met his brother with a manly cordiality that leaves a pleasant impression of his matured character, and that this behaviour was due to forgiveness rather than to forgetfulness of what had taken place between them.

He seems, however, to have indulged a certain grim sense of humour in playing upon the fears his presence obviously inspired. Repeated offers of armed escort having been declined with thanks and excuses, Jacob breathed a sigh of relief when he saw the last of his brother's formidable Edomites disappear over the hills to the south; and then, instead of following in the same direction, he proceeded to increase the distance between them with all available speed, by crossing the fords of Jordan at Bethshan and proceeding to Shechem. There Jacob abode for some time, having purchased land and erected an altar, and he might have remained longer, but for an occurrence involving the family honour which aroused the vengeful fury of Jacob's sons, and ended in the indiscriminate slaughter of one of the leading families of Shechem. Therefore they removed thence and came to Beth-el. And here it is interesting to note, once more, how very gradual is Jacob's growth in Divine knowledge, and how, in addition to more recently acquired faith, he still clung to the shreds of ancient tradition and prejudice.

He had learned on his first visit to Beth-el that " El Shaddai " was in truth the Protector of his race, whether here or elsewhere, demanding his first allegiance; but he felt at the same time that it was well to pay all due respect to the gods of the districts through which he passed. For, as they departed from Shechem, Jacob said unto his household and to all that were with him: Put away the strange gods that are among you, and let us arise and go up to Beth-el, and I will make there an altar unto God Who answered me in the day of my distress and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. (*Gen.* xxxv. 2–4.) From this it will be seen that the said deities were by no means discredited, but that their services were simply dispensed with for the present on entering the jurisdiction of a God more powerful than they, Whose jealousy and anger might be aroused by their presence.

Journeying on still towards Hebron, they halted at Ephrath, which is Bethlehem, for there Rachel, Jacob's well-loved wife, the mother of Joseph, died in giving birth to her second son Benjamin, and there she was buried. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day. (*Gen.* xxxv. 20.)

And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah, which is Hebron, where Abraham and Isaac sojourned. And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him. (*Gen.* xxxv. 27–29.)

IV

JOSEPH'S RISE TO POWER

AND now there follows a story so dramatic, so full of human interest, and told with such elaboration of literary detail, as to set it in a place by itself amongst the narratives which form the backbone of Scripture history. Joseph was the first of the National Heroes of Israel, and the story of how the shepherd boy, by his ability and uprightness, raised himself from slavery to the position of Viceroy of Egypt, and thereby saved his people from starvation, was doubtless a favourite among the folk-stories told by Hebrew mothers to their children and recited by expert or professional story-tellers round camp fires in the wilderness or in the bazaars of the cities of Israel.

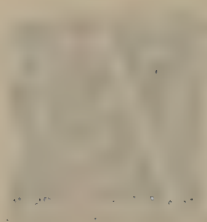
The ten elder sons of Jacob were turbulent men with all the faults and vices of the half-wild dweller in the wilderness, not one of them, with the exception, perhaps, of Judah, indicating by any of their recorded acts that they were fitted to apprehend, far less to transmit to others, the spiritual privileges of their family.

Even Joseph himself does not appear at first in a very attractive light. Being the son of his old age he was his father's favourite, and coming and going among his elder brethen in the field he seems to have been entrusted with the invidious task of reporting upon their doings. Consequently he was not much beloved, especially as these reports were generally unfavourable, and this growing dislike ripened into hatred when the young man developed a faculty for dreaming, and of foolishly narrating dreams, the obvious inference of which was that he, Joseph, was destined to be the great man of the family.

In seasons of drought, flocks had to wander far in search of pasture, and thus it was, doubtless, that Joseph, sent by his father to see how it fared with his brethren, had to proceed as far north as Dothan, on the borders of Esdraelon, before he overtook them. His appearance in the distance, alone and helpless, aroused fierce discussion amongst these vindictive men. Here at last was a chance to get rid of their detested younger brother, his reports, and his dreams. The majority were for slaying him then and there, but Reuben's influence prevailed and the unhappy lad was cast instead into a dry disused well pending an ultimate decision. The advent of a caravan of Ishmaelite (or Midianite) merchants going down into Egypt suggested to Judah an alternative by which they might get rid of their brother without actually incurring blood-guiltiness. Accordingly they drew Joseph out of the pit, and, callously indifferent to his prayers and entreaties, sold him to the Ishmaelites, who carried him down into Egypt and there sold him to Potiphar, captain of the king's bodyguard. (*Plate* 7.)

Plate No. 7

JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT



gypt, and thereby saved his people from

t the cities of Israel.

On their return home the wretched father accepted without question, on the evidence of a blood-stained coat, which he recognized as that which he had bestowed upon him as a mark of honour, the surmise that his beloved son had been slain and devoured by wild beasts. And Jacob rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. (*Gen.* xxxvii. 34–35.)

Unhappy as his fate undoubtedly was, Joseph nevertheless brought with him into captivity the blessing of his father's God. Everything prospered in his hands; and finding him upright and trustworthy, Potiphar promoted him to the position of steward of his household. True he lost this by the false accusation of a depraved woman, but Joseph soon found himself enjoying the same measure of trust within the walls of a prison as he had been favoured with from his former master. The keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison, and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. (*Gen.* xxxix. 22.)

Joseph thus found himself on one occasion the custodian of two of the king's household, who had incurred Pharaoh's displeasure, namely his chief butler and his chief baker; and entering their cell one morning, he found them in depression and perplexity—each having dreamed a vivid dream which obviously bore a meaning of some kind which they were wholly unable to decipher. Having recounted their dreams to Joseph, he felt that the interpretation which arose in his mind was no mere conjecture of his own, but the result of spiritual God-given insight. He therefore declared it with confidence, and within three days the interpretation proved correct in every detail. The king restored the chief butler unto his butlership again and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand; but he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted unto them. (*Gen.* xl. 21–22.)

At this period of history (when, according to some authorities, Apepi of the 17th Dynasty, the 3rd Dynasty of the Shepherd Kings, occupied the throne of Egypt) the intellectual and philosophic religion of the first empire had degenerated into gross superstition and degrading forms of animal worship. Magic of all kinds, necromancy, and divination, bulked largely in the practice of religion, while, both here and in other countries, implicit reliance was placed upon dreams, as affording certain indication and warning of future events.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the power of interpreting dreams, and disentangling the meaning of their mysterious allegory, was held in high honour, and that those who were known to possess it found swift and ready access to the favour of the great.

And it came to pass at the end of two full years that Pharaoh dreamed: and behold, he stood by the river. And behold, there came up out of the river

seven well-favoured kine and fat-fleshed; and they fed in a meadow. And behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill-favoured and lean-fleshed; and they did eat up the first seven fat kine. And when they had eaten them, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill-favoured as at the beginning. So Pharaoh awoke.

And he slept and dreamed the second time: and behold seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. And behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprang up after them. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and behold it was a dream. (*Gen.* xli. 1–7, and 20–21.)

In the morning the king was sorely perplexed and summoned his magicians in haste, but none proved equal to the task of interpretation.

Then the chief butler bethought him of his experience in the prison-house and suggested that trial might be made of the skill of the Hebrew slave, who was accordingly sent for.

On his entrance, the courtiers beheld a man in the prime of life and strikingly handsome in person, who, having made his obeisance, calmly awaited the royal command. He listened carefully to Pharaoh's description of his dreams, and then, after attributing such power as he possessed entirely to the inspiration of the God Whom he served, he gave a clear and convincing interpretation of the dual vision, for the dream is one, he said.

Seven consecutive years of abundant harvest were immediately to be expected, succeeded by seven years of unprecedented famine and scarcity. Having made this statement, Joseph followed it up with a concise sketch of the practical means that ought to be adopted in order to make the super-abundance of the first period serve the need of the years of starvation.

As Pharaoh listened, he was convinced that he saw before him a man of exceptional business capacity and practical energy, and when Joseph concluded by advising the king to appoint an officer to organize the necessary arrangements, Pharaoh felt that of all his courtiers, there was not one so well qualified for the office as this man of his own race, Joseph the Hebrew.

This decision was promptly ratified; Joseph, decorated and invested, was accorded a semi-regal progress, heralds proclaiming the honours of the new Minister of State. And Pharaoh gave him to wife Asenath, daughter of Potipherah, priest of On.

Joseph entered at once upon his new duties. During the seven years of plenty which ensued, his light travelling chariot was to be seen on high roads and byways in every corner of the land, as he went to and fro upon journeys of inspection. And he erected huge granaries in the provincial towns to accommodate the vast accumulation of surplus corn.

Then followed, as foretold, the seven years of dearth. The fruitful Nile,

which for seven seasons had greatly exceeded its normal flood-limit, now scarcely overflowed its average channel, and land which had " brought forth by handfuls " now glared, dusty and desert, in the pitiless sunshine.

Nor was Egypt alone in its suffering. In normal years it owed much of its wealth to its export trade in grain, and the countries round about, which did not produce enough corn for their consumption, began also to feel the pinch of want, while in Canaan, coincident drought caused the flocks and herds to perish for lack of pasture.

In the first year of scarcity the Egyptians came to Joseph, who opened Pharaoh's granaries and sold corn to them for money. When the money was exhausted, he accepted their live stock at a valuation, and when this also became Pharaoh's private property, the starving people, having nothing left but their lands and their lives, were forced to sell these also, being suffered to remain as tenants on the land they formerly possessed, at a rental of one-fifth of the produce. By Joseph's management, Pharaoh thus became the virtual owner as well as king of the whole land of Egypt!

V

ISRAEL'S MIGRATION INTO EGYPT

AND when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, he said unto his sons . . . Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence that we may live and not die. . . . And Joseph's brethren came and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph knew his brethren but they knew not him. (*Gen.* xlii. 1–2, 6–7.)

Years had blunted the bitterness of his resentment and re-awakened instead far-away memories of the love of father and mother, and of the simple patriarchal life of the wilderness where his childhood had been spent, and when, perhaps, his brothers had been kind.

The spirit of forgiveness moved in his breast, but this he repressed for the present, and spoke roughly to his brethren, accusing them of being spies; and in spite of their denials and protest, put them all together into ward three days. Finally he released them and sent them home with such food as they needed. Simeon, however, he retained, as a hostage for their return with that youngest brother of whom they spoke and whom he desired to see.

Their perplexity at this treatment was increased, first at a caravanserai on the way north and afterwards on their arrival, by the discovery that every man's money had been returned and was in his sack's mouth. (*Plate* 8.)

And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought from Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food. And Judah spake unto him saying, If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food, but if thou wilt not send him we will not go down: for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face except your brother be with you. (*Gen.* xliii. 2–3.)

Jacob could hardly be persuaded to part with Benjamin, but at last he yielded; and anxious care was expended on the preparation of a present which might find them favour in the sight of "the man." A little balm and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds. And take double money in your hands. Take also your brother and arise, go again unto the man. And God Almighty give you mercy before him that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. (*Gen.* xliii. 11–14.)

Once more arrived in Egypt, they stood with other strangers in the crowded audience chamber, and learned to their amazement, and not a little to their alarm as well, that they were honoured by an invitation to dine with Joseph in his private house. They were somewhat reassured, however, by the release of their brother Simeon, and by being told by the steward that he himself had had charge of their

PLATE No. 8

JOSEPH'S BRETHREN AT THE INN.
EVERY MAN'S MONEY IN HIS SACK

PLATE No. 9

JUDAH PLEADING BEFORE JOSEPH FOR
HIS BROTHER BENJAMIN

money which had been returned; and they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon. (*Gen.* xliii. 25.)

Joseph received them graciously as they bowed before him, inquiring after the welfare of their father, and with difficulty concealed his emotion when his eyes rested on Benjamin, the infant brother whom he remembered, now arrived at early manhood. " God be gracious unto thee, my son," he said. Then he commanded that the meat should be served. And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians that did eat with him, by themselves ; because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians. . . . And he took and sent messes unto them from before him. . . . And they drank and were merry with him. (*Gen.* xliii. 32–34.)

On the morrow at dawn they departed, all unaware that they took with them not only their money as before, but also Joseph's silver cup which he had commanded to be concealed in Benjamin's sack. But they were scarce clear of the city, when they were overtaken by the steward, who sternly demanded why they had rewarded evil for good, by stealing from their host. The men repudiated the charge with indignation, but alas ! when search was made there was the incriminating cup in Benjamin's sack. Then they rent their clothes in grief and sore dismay and laded every man his ass and returned to the city. And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house, for he was still there; and they fell before him on the ground.

Judah, who was their spokesman, could make no defence; but he entered an eloquent plea for pity on behalf of their aged father. He drew a touching picture of the old man's anguish and despair should they return without the son of his old age. It shall come to pass when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die; and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant my father with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now therefore I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. (*Gen.* xliv. 30–34.) (*Plate* 9.)

Then Joseph could no longer refrain himself, and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. Dread, misgiving, and amazement contended in their breasts as they heard this man, the governor before whom, even now, they trembled, declaring himself to be Joseph, their own brother whom they had sold into slavery!

With affectionate reassurance, Joseph told them not to blame themselves overmuch, for that their deed had been overruled by God, Who had sent him before them to preserve life. And with such kindly words and with

embraces, he calmed their fears until at length they were able to converse with freedom.

And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying Joseph's brethren are come : and it pleased Pharaoh well, who bid Joseph say to his brethren, Get you into the land of Canaan and take your father and your households and come unto me : And I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. So Joseph sent away his brethren, adding at the same time the shrewdly humorous advice : See that ye fall not out by the way. (*Gen.* xlv. 16-18, 24.)

Little wonder that Jacob's heart fainted, and that he believed them not, when the eleven returned with the amazing tidings : Joseph is yet alive, and he is Governor over all the land of Egypt ! . . . but, when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived ; and Israel said, It is enough ; Joseph my son is yet alive ; I will go and see him before I die. (*Gen.* xlv. 26–28.)

They met in the district of Goshen. Slowly and with many halts, the family of Israel had covered the weary distance from Hebron with their flocks and herds and creaking bullock-carts, the aged patriarch at their head eagerly gazing southwards in anticipation of his son's arrival. At last a cloud of dust upon the road, and the flashing of spear-heads and accoutrements herald his approach. A splendidly appointed chariot swiftly emerges from the dust haze ; it wheels and halts, and its occupant leaps to the ground and hastens to embrace the old man who now approaches with trembling outstretched hands, and tears of rejoicing and thankfulness. And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive. (*Gen.* xlvi. 30.) (*Plate* 10.)

And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen ; and they had possessions therein, and grew and multiplied exceedingly. . . . And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. (*Gen.* xlvii. 27, 28.) And he gathered his sons together, and blessed them and charged them that they should not bury his body in Egypt, but that they should lay him in the cave of Machpelah, beside Abraham and Isaac his fathers and Leah his wife. This behest Joseph piously carried out when Jacob died shortly afterwards. He was embalmed by the Egyptian physicians, and with all fitting ceremonial, laid to rest in the sepulchre of his fathers at Hebron.

In due time Joseph also died, full of years and of honour, leaving two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to represent his name and tribe.

In personal character Joseph was a type of manly generosity and forgiveness. He possessed a genius for administration, but his statesmanship was disastrous and short-sighted, and the hatred he must have aroused against his master by the oppressive use he made of the necessities of the people, doubtless contributed not a little to hasten the downfall of the dynasty whose tenure of the throne of Egypt he had endeavoured to strengthen.

PLATE No. 16
THE MEETING OF JACOB AND JOSEPH IN EGYPT

VI

PREPARATIONS FOR ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE FROM BONDAGE

WITH the death of Joseph ends the Patriarchal chapter of the history of Israel. Then follows a gap of four hundred years and more in the Scripture narrative, during which dynasties arose and fell and the fate of empires was changed, but which was briefly summarized by the historian of Israel in these words: The children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, and waxed exceeding mighty, and the land was filled with them. (*Exod.* i. 7.)

But we learn from other sources that shortly after the death of Joseph, the Egyptians rose against the tyranny of their foreign oppressors; the Hyksos were driven from the throne of Lower Egypt, and the rule of the native kings was re-established, two of whom, Thothmes I and Thothmes III, led conquering armies through Palestine and subdued the Hittite power in the North, together with that of Phœnicia. This influence, however, was seriously imperilled by the heretic king Amen-hotep, who, by seeking to change the religion of the land, caused such internal disturbance that, as we learn from letters written to him by harassed governors of feudatory cities, he was practically unable to send them help to maintain his or their authority in Canaan and Phœnicia.

In these political changes and crises the Hebrew people took no part. They lived their own life, separate and isolated by occupation and religion from the rest of the community, though many had doubtless drifted into the cities where they acquired knowledge of the arts, crafts, and learning of the Egyptians.

Rameses the Great, of the 19th Dynasty, recognized that this large body of aliens in the midst of his kingdom constituted a definite menace to the safety of the realm; and he met this difficulty, and at the same time utilized a valuable source of labour, by reducing the Hebrews to servitude and employing them on public works in different parts of Egypt, while at the same time he endeavoured to check their increasing numbers by giving orders that all male infants should be drowned in the river at birth.

And they set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens, and they built for Pharaoh treasure cities, Pithom * and Raamses. . . . And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of

* The City of Pithom has been discovered about 12 miles west of Ismailia. Its bricks bear the stamp of Rameses, many of them of inferior quality, possibly through being made without straw.

service in the field. All their service wherein they made them serve was with rigour. (*Exod.* i. 11, 14.)

You may see the labours of the Hebrews illustrated on the walls of ancient contemporary monuments where every detail of the work is portrayed with scrupulous exactness; from the hewing out of the clay and kneading it into proper consistency with water drawn by Shadoof or Sakieh, to the setting out of the finished bricks to dry in the sun. Nor has the artist omitted to introduce the overseer and taskmaster, with uplifted stick, superintending each stage of the work. (*Plate* 11.)

The decree of infanticide was, of course, evaded in every possible way. A Levite woman, having given birth to a son, hid him three months, and when he could no longer be concealed, she laid him in a tiny boat woven of papyrus and launched it on the river, among the reeds and water-plants close to the royal ladies' bathing-place, in the faint hope that someone might see and have pity upon him, because " he was a goodly child."

And as she had planned, so it turned out. The little vessel attracted the notice of one of Pharaoh's daughters, who is said to have been a childless woman. She rescued him, and adopted him as her own son, and she called his name Moses.

When grown to manhood, the easy life of the young courtier came to an abrupt ending. He interposed on one occasion to protect one of his countrymen who was being grossly ill-treated. He slew the Egyptian, believing that there had been no witnesses of the deed, and buried his body.

But the thing had come to Pharaoh's ears, so Moses fled to the wilderness of Horeb, which is Sinai, in the land of the Midianites, and dwelt there for upwards of fifty years with Jethro the Priest of Midian, whose son-in-law he became.

This was the time of his real education, of preparation for his great destiny as the Leader—nay, one should rather say, as the Maker of the Hebrew Nation. Brought up as he had been at the court of Pharaoh, and learned in all the learning of the Egyptians, Moses could have had little opportunity of knowing anything of the God of his forefathers. What more probable, therefore, than that Jethro was his teacher? for this man also was of the race of Abraham, and the Midianites, from their isolated desert life, may have been able to maintain their faith in greater purity than had their cousins of Israel in their more unfavourable condition and surroundings. And what Moses learned from Jethro would, as in the case of other prophets and seers, be ripened into more perfect knowledge during these fifty pregnant years of lonely contemplation in the school of the wilderness.

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the back side of the desert and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire in the midst of a bush; and he looked and behold the bush burned with fire and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see

PLATE NO. 11
ISRAELITES MAKING BRICKS IN EGYPT

PLATE No. 11

LEPSIUS' MEASURING RODS IN EGYPT

[illegible]

Fifty years of preparation had rendered the sen[illegible] standing acutely perceptive of the immanent presence [illegible] of His Divine [illegible] spectacular manifestation [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] that He had been known hitherto only by a title or attribute, Moses was to say, I AM, the eternally existent, hath sent me, and Jehovah is the name by which He shall be known to His people.

[illegible] the Heavenly mandate, set forth at once for Egypt, meeting [illegible]

And Moses [illegible]

[illegible]

PLATE NO. 12
MOSES AND THE BURNING BUSH

this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. (*Exod.* iii. 1–5.) (*Plate* 12.)

Fifty years of preparation had rendered the senses of his spiritual understanding acutely perceptive of the immanent presence of God and the expression of His Divine Will. No spectacular manifestation, no audible voice was needed by the seer, but how otherwise could he convey to those to whom he was accredited, the sanction and authority of his message, than by the description of a vision and of audible words? As in other instances, therefore, throughout Scripture, where the spiritual experiences of God's chosen servants are paraphrased into conversations as between man and man, so now this was the readiest way by which Moses could convey to his people the Divine communication and message borne in upon his soul, that he himself was the chosen instrument whereby God purposed to effect the deliverance of Israel " out of the affliction of Egypt, unto the land of the Canaanites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." And further, that this deliverance was to be wrought in the Name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, loyal return to Whose obedience would result in the formation of a nation, blessed above all other nations, from what was now but a scattered and disunited people.

And should the Israelites demand the name of this their promised Deliverer, seeing that He had been known hitherto only by a title or attribute, Moses was to say, I AM, the eternally existent, hath sent me, and Jehovah is the name by which He shall be known to His people.

Moses, obedient to the Heavenly mandate, set forth at once for Egypt, meeting on the way his brother Aaron, whom God had commissioned to act as his colleague in the great undertaking.

And Moses and Aaron gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel: and Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses. . . . And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked upon their affliction then they bowed their heads and worshipped. And afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let My people go that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go. (*Exod.* iv. 29–v. 2.)

The sole result of this first effort was the imposition of additional burdens upon the already overwrought bondsmen, whose elders met the brothers as they came forth from their audience, and upbraided them with having put a sword in the hand of Pharaoh to slay them.

Isolated as they now stood, by the distrust of their countrymen, Moses and Aaron courageously renewed their demand to the king, giving at the same time proof of the power of their God, by casting down a rod which immediately became a venomous cobra, that same *Uræus* which, carved on every Egyptian gateway, and worn on the front of the king's helmet, is the insignium of his royal power. The significance of this portent lay in the fact that while the Egyptian magicians were able to do the like with their enchantments, Aaron's rod-serpent attacked and devoured the others, thereby demonstrating the relative power of the forces represented. Nevertheless, Pharaoh's determination remained unshaken. " He would not let Israel go." (*Plate* 13.)

Then followed a succession of plagues, most of them only too familiar visitations, but which, following in close succession as foretold by Moses, and affecting the Egyptians only, while the children of Israel remained immune, were evidently to be attributed to the wrath of this unknown God, Whom Pharaoh had defied.

First, the life-giving stream of the Nile became infected with some blood-red plant or substance which poisoned the fish and putrefied the water. Then frogs appeared in such numbers, within doors and without, that when they died, the air was fœtid with the stench of their corruption, a predisposing cause, maybe, of several of the plagues which were to follow. Then appeared a malady peculiarly repulsive to the punctiliously clean Egyptian—the torment of lice. And as the burden of each new affliction made itself felt, Pharaoh would send for Moses in haste, promising anything, everything, if only relief were granted; which promises were as invariably broken when it was evident that the danger was over-past. Truly the Orient changeth not. The whole episode might be a chapter of the diplomacy of the Nearer East of the present day.

Swarms of noisome flies corrupted food and water—nor did the cattle escape; they died of a very grievous murrain, but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.

" But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he would not let the people go," in spite of the torment of the boils which was now added to the sufferings of Egypt.

Then Moses, in the Name of the God of Israel which had now become a name of terror, threatened to touch the very life of the nation.

And Moses stretched forth his rod toward Heaven; and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast, and the hail smote every herb of the field and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen where the children of Israel were, was there no hail. (*Exod.* ix. 23, 25-26.)

Pride still ruled the will of Pharaoh Meneptah, nor could the words of his servants " Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed ? " induce him to yield more than a conditional promise, although Moses threatened in the Name of God the destruction by locusts of such crops as the hail had left.

PLATE NO. 13
MOSES AND AARON BEFORE PHARAOH

PLATE NO. 14
THE PASSOVER IN EGYPT

When it was morning the east wind brought the locusts; very grievous were they; for they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened, and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left. (*Exod.* x. 13–15.)

Yet when this plague also was removed, there remained the stubborn heart of Pharaoh hardened against the Voice of God and the misery of His people. His personal obstinacy which took the place of what would have been firmness in a strong man, automatically dictated another refusal when the endurance of his people well-nigh broke down under the nervous strain of three days' thick darkness throughout the land of Egypt. They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days : but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. (*Exod.* x. 23.) *

We may imagine with what eager interest this contest for their freedom was watched by the children of Israel; and it is evident that they had recovered complete confidence in the issue and in the capacity of their champion and leader, seeing that the months of waiting must have been thoroughly utilized by their officers in plans for mobilization, and in organizing the assembly into divisions and sub-divisions, by tribes or otherwise, of a heterogeneous and wholly undisciplined mob of slaves, with their women and children, cattle and transport; each with its definite marching orders to be strictly obeyed when the final command should be issued.

It was known beforehand that the tenth plague would be final and that the panic-stricken Egyptians would no longer be able to resist the power of Israel's God. When, therefore, the blow fell, and the breath of pestilence carried death into every household, " and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead," Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the Lord as ye have said. Also take your flocks and herds as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people that they might send them out of the land in haste, for they said, We be all dead men. (*Exod.* xii. 30–33.)

Truly it was " a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt," for while the emigrants were in the very act of partaking of that midnight meal, the hurried details of which were subsequently elaborated into the ritual of the great Passover Feast, the order came to set forth upon their journey. (*Plate* 14.)

* Except as regards the duration of the " plague," this is a frequent experience in the valley of the Nile during the spring months, when the hot Khamsin wind raises dense clouds of desert sand and dust, to the absolute exclusion of light and almost of breatheable air.

VII

MOSES LEADS ISRAEL FROM EGYPT TO HOREB

SOME confusion there must inevitably have been, but it speaks volumes for the organizing capacity of the great leader of Israel and of his lieutenants, that the Exodus preserved the semblance of the march of an army; the divisions neither clubbing together to their utter disaster when rumours of pursuit overtook them, nor losing touch and breaking up into scattered bands of fugitives.

There were two routes to Canaan, the Land of Promise; but the direct road, i.e. the regular trade route eastwards, by the wilderness of Paran, was closed to them by Egyptian frontier posts and garrisons; and the only alternative was the roundabout but comparatively safe way by the Desert of Sinai, which possessed the additional advantage that the emigrants might depend upon the support and alliance of their kinsmen the Midianites, and that their leader, by his long residence in the district, was familiar with every detail of its topography and resources.

The course followed by the column is somewhat obscure, as it is impossible to identify the localities named, and the actual place where it reached the Red Sea depends upon the debatable question of the change or permanence of the present coast line at the head of the Gulf. The probability, however, seems to be that the Israelites, inclining too much to the west, found themselves somewhere near the modern port of Suez in a position of great danger; hemmed in by the wilderness on either hand, the sea in front, and the chariots of Egypt behind; for Pharaoh, now recovered from his panic, followed hard after them, bent on retrieving the error he deemed he had made in losing a vast army of unpaid labour.

In this strait the people cried unto the Lord and clamoured against Moses. But Jehovah opened a highway of escape for His people, causing a strong easterly gale to co-operate with the ebb-tide in driving the water from the head of the Gulf. A ridge of sand was thus laid bare with, apparently, a shallow lagoon to the left, and the deeper waters of the sea to the right.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward. (*Exod.* xiv. 15.)

So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon dry land and passed over in safety; for although the host of Pharaoh followed after them, a terrific thunderstorm acted as a rear-guard and kept the armies apart, while the wheels of the pursuing chariots sank in the soft sand so that they drave them heavily. (*Plate* 15.)

PLATE No. 15
THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA

Disheartened by the conviction that the dreaded God of the Hebrews fought against them in person, they tried to turn back, but it was too late : for the gale abated towards morning and the sea returned to his strength; and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; and there remained not so much as one of them. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. (*Exod.* xiv. 27–30.)

" Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord and spake saying: I will sing unto the Lord for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea "—a grand battle psalm which was responded to antiphonally by the women of Israel, led by Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, who took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. (*Exod.* xv. 1, 20, 21.)

Then the column marched slowly southward, keeping to the comparatively level ground near the sea, where they might expect to find a sufficiency of water in the valleys which descend from the high barren table-land of el-Tih.

After a brief halt at Marah, whose waters were found to be too brackish for use, they pitched their camp in the oasis of Elim and remained there for a month, thence proceeding to the wilderness of Sin.

Time was needed to face and review a situation which seemed sufficiently critical. Moses by his personal influence and action, and by the promises made in the Name of Jehovah, had made himself responsible for the maintenance of a vast multitude of human beings whom he had induced to leave their homes in Egypt, where at least they had sufficiency of food; and thus far he had only brought them into a barren inhospitable land, where there was every probability that they might have to fight for even a share of the scanty pasture and the meagre water supply upon which their very lives depended. Already, in fact, the people were beginning to feel the pinch of hunger and to murmur against Moses and Aaron, saying, " Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger." (*Exod.* xvi. 3.)*

In this emergency Moses appealed for guidance to Jehovah, firm in his

* The Hebrews possessed numerous flocks and herds, but rarely does the Arab use these as an ordinary source of food. His cattle and goats supply him with milk, his staple food in various forms. But long residence in Egypt had accustomed the Israelites to a vegetable diet in addition, and also to poultry, and they murmured for lack of this their accustomed fare.

reliance that He Who had thus far led His people in safety would not desert them in their need. And the answer came forthwith. He was instructed to show the people how they might supplement their stock of food with the natural resources of the wilderness. He taught them to snare the flights of quail that settled on the ground at sunset, and how to utilize the daily supply of *manna*, a gum resembling sago in substance and flavour, which exudes from the tamarisk tree and other desert shrubs.*

From the wilderness of Sin, Moses now led the people towards Horeb, by way of the valley of Feiran, to Rephidim, where again they suffered from lack of water; and where, moreover, the desert tribe of the Amalekites, who had for some time been annoying their rear, now opposed their further progress in force. Joshua, an Ephraimite, was entrusted with the command of the fighting men of Israel, while Moses, supported by Aaron and Hur, ascended a hill whence he could overlook the battlefield. A general engagement ensued, in which the Amalekites were worsted, for it came to pass when Moses held up his hand that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. (*Exod.* xvii. 11–13.) (*Plate* 16.)

Having cleared their front of these enemies, who attempted no further molestation, Israel proceeded onwards and encamped on the level plain that skirts the foot of Mount Sinai. And here Moses was rejoiced to receive a visit from Jethro, his father-in-law, who came to bid him welcome, bringing his wife and his two sons whom he had left behind when he departed on his mission to Egypt. Jethro sat next day and watched the proceedings of the court which Moses, after the custom of Arab chiefs, held daily at his tent door, and then the old man spoke frankly and told his son-in-law that he would break down altogether under the strain of overwork unless he relegated some part of it to others. The advice was accepted, and Moses forthwith appointed magistrates with varying grades of authority and power to try and decide minor cases of dispute, reserving it to himself to deal with questions of the greatest difficulty only.

Relief from the details of administration was the more necessary at this time, that upon the personal influence of Moses alone hung the issue of events.

* Though the natural crop of *manna* must have been utterly inadequate for the needs of so great a multitude, we have but to remember a parallel instance, where the material substance of five loaves and two fishes was increased by Divine power so as to satisfy the hunger of 5,000 men.

PLATE No. 16
THE BATTLE OF REPHIDIM

VIII

PLATE NO. 17
THE GIVING OF THE LAW ON SINAI

VIII

THE DIVINE LAW REVEALED AT MOUNT SINAI

AS yet the Israelites were a mere aggregation of tribes and families, bound together by no cohesive interest or tradition save the memory of slavery, and liable even now to resolve themselves into scattered bands; some to drift back, perhaps, into voluntary bondage, and others to be absorbed by surrounding nations.

Now was the time, therefore, while yet the people retained a vivid recollection of their recent emancipation, to arouse in them a common enthusiasm for the worship and realization of Jehovah as their great Deliverer, to announce to them the covenant that even now He was ready to make with them, and to awaken a conviction that by loyal obedience alone to God's laws and ordinances could they secure those privileges and blessings which it was in His power and pleasure to bestow.

Speaking, therefore, unto the elders of Israel in the Name of the Lord, Moses declared to them the Divine Message.

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto Myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My Covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. . . . And all the people answered together, All that the Lord hath spoken that we will do. (*Exod.* xix. 4–8.)

The people having been thus solemnly prepared for the reception of the Law. Moses obeyed the Divine summons and went up into the Mount of God.

The events of that memorable day were indelibly imprinted on the memory of the witnesses who recalled and recorded them in after years. From the limits of the camp of Israel they watched their leader as he slowly ascended the rocky pathway until he was lost to view in the rolling mists and impenetrable gloom that shrouded the summit of Horeb. From time to time the darkness was suffused with the glare of lightning, as the earth quaked and the crags reverberated with the thunder of Heaven, so that the people trembled and feared as in the immediate presence of Jehovah. Then the voice of Moses was heard pronouncing the words of the Law as contained in those ten Commandments which sum up the whole duty of man to God and to his neighbour. (*Plate* 17.)

Seventy elders, representatives of the congregation of Israel, awaited his return on the lower slopes of the mountain, and to them Moses read aloud all the words of the Law which he had written in the book of the Covenant, and

[illegible]

[illegible] This Tabernacle, in [illegible] enclosed by an open court [illegible]

PLATE NO. 18

MOSES INSPECTING THE WEAVING AND
EMBROIDERING OF THE HANGINGS
OF THE TABERNACLE

Presence and protection of Jehovah. The Ark of the Covenant, a chest containing the words of God inscribed on tables of stone, was henceforth to be the object of their supreme reverence, and the Tabernacle that enshrined it, known as " The Tent of Meeting," was held to be verily and indeed the Abode of God Himself.

The structure of this Tabernacle, its dimensions, materials, ornaments, and furniture, are prescribed with the most minute detail through many chapters of Exodus; as are also the official vestments of the chief priest and his assistants. But it does not follow that these elaborate designs were fully carried out at once, or even perhaps during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. It is probable, on the contrary, that something simpler served the purpose until a permanent resting-place was found for the Ark of the Lord in the Sanctuary of Shiloh.* (*Plate* 18.)

* The Sanctuary itself was built of boards of acacia wood, bolted together with bars so that the whole structure could readily be taken to pieces for purposes of transport. It measured 45 ft. by 15 ft. by 15 ft., and was covered with a double layer of curtains of goats' hair and of embroidered linen. The roof also was double, being composed of dyed sheepskins overlaid with seal-skin.

The interior was divided into two portions. The inner, a smaller cell, called the Holy of Holies, into which the High Priest entered once a year, contained the sacred Ark on which rested the golden Mercy Seat with its cherubim of gold, and this cell was separated by a richly-embroidered linen veil from the outer chamber, or Holy Place, in which stood the six-branched golden lampstand, with its ever-lit seven lamps, the table of shew-bread, and the altar of incense. This Tabernacle, in front of which stood the Altar of burnt offerings and the brazen laver, was enclosed by an open court 150 ft. by 75 ft., formed of linen sheets suspended from brass pillars.

IX

THE WANDERINGS IN THE WILDERNESS

NOT more than a year seems to have been spent at Sinai, and then the people set forth once again towards the Land of Promise, preceded by the Ark of the Covenant, which always led the way by three days' journey, to fix the next halting place. About twenty camps in all are mentioned between Horeb and Kadesh Barnea, though what was the exact route followed is unknown, as it is impossible to identify the places mentioned in the Scripture itinerary; but it seems evident that the Israelites kept tolerably close to the western shore of the Gulf of Akaba, to its northern extremity at Ezion Geber, and that they then proceeded direct to Kadesh, a fairly well watered district on the edge of the desert, fifty miles south of Beersheba. As usual, the people found cause for murmuring on the way. They were wearied with the monotony of their fare, longing for variety, so that their long-suffering leader well-nigh lost patience with them; and it is recorded that God, while indulging their longing by sending an abnormal flight of quails among their tents, expressed His displeasure by causing many of the people to die, probably of surfeit, caused by over-indulgence in the food of which they had been long deprived.

Hoping to proceed onwards, without delay at Kadesh, Moses sent forward a band of twelve spies—a man from each tribe—to report upon the land, its produce and its inhabitants, and whether the cities were fortified or not. After forty days' absence the spies returned with a most disheartening report. They stated that the land was indeed such as it had been described, " a land flowing with milk and honey," as witness the basket of splendid grapes and other fruits which they brought with them from the Hebron district, but that the inhabitants and their cities were far too numerous and too strong for the Israelites to attack with any hope of success.

Two only of the twelve, Caleb the representative of Judah, and Joshua the Ephraimite, uplifted their voices in indignant protest. Ashamed of the cowardice of their countrymen, who apparently expected to enter in and possess the land without any exertion of their own, and whom they saw wailing and weeping at the adverse news, some of them actually proposing to return to Egypt, they rent their clothes and said, " If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them

Plate No. 19
THE REPORT OF THE SPIES, AND
REMONSTRANCE OF CALEB

not. But all the congregation bade stone them with stones." (*Num.* xiv. 8–10.) (*Plate* 19.)

With difficulty the wrath of God was turned away, by the intercession of Moses, from the people who had proved themselves so unworthy of the mighty works He had wrought for them, their punishment being commuted into condemnation to wander in the wilderness until that generation died out. Caleb only, and Joshua, should live to lead into the promised land those who were still young, and those who were yet unborn.

Goaded into shame and anger by the burning words of Caleb, some of the people refused to abide by the condemnation of God, and in spite of the warnings of Moses, they delivered a furious but ill-sustained attack upon the Amalekites and Canaanites of " the mountain," i.e. the foothills of the Negeb, with the result that they suffered an ignominious defeat and were driven back as far as to Hormah (Zephath).

The Land of Canaan, taking the word in its widest sense, was at this period in a very different condition from that which it presented in the time of Abraham. Then, the inhabitants were comparatively few in number, and judging by the welcome accorded to strangers, there was room for all comers. But five hundred years had wrought a mighty change in this respect. The maritime plain, or Shephelah, extending from Gerar to Jaffa and inland to the foothills of the central backbone of the hill system of Canaan, had recently been conquered and firmly held by Cretan invaders called Philistines, who had taken advantage of the temporary feebleness of Egypt to wrest from its grasp this rich possession. The high lands east and west of Jordan from Lebanon as far south as the river Arnon was the country of the Amorites, a warlike race akin, it is said, to the Libyans of Africa. They had once dominated the whole land, but had been obliged to yield to the pressure of population, as the lowlands and valleys were for the most part occupied by the Canaanites, a people of Arabian ancestry. Scattered colonies of Hittites, a pigtailed race of Mongols, had drifted south from their proper country of Pontus and Armenia, and besides these were others mentioned in Scripture, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites and Jebusites, sub-divisions of one or other of the above races, but of no political individuality or importance.

The very number of these nationalities constituted the weakness observed by Caleb and Joshua as affording opportunity for a well-organized and determined invasion. With the exception of the federated cities of the Philistines, Canaan west of Jordan presented a number of petty city states, highly civilized, perhaps, but enervated by luxury and ease, and without cohesion or feeling of common nationality, a lack to which the peculiar geography of the country contributed in no small degree, and which exposed them to danger if attacked swiftly and individually.

But in point of fact, the Hebrews lacked as yet that grip and manliness of character which qualifies men to be conquerors. They were not yet free of the shrinking timidity which had been drilled into them by generations of servitude in Egypt, so that their chastisement of forty years' wandering in the wilderness was a blessing in disguise.

In defending themselves against constant raids by Amalekites and other predatory tribes on their vague borders at Kadesh, Israel learned something from their enemies of the rudiments of warfare and military science. When finally, therefore, they took the offensive, the army which entered Canaan under Joshua many years later was of very different material from the feeble, helpless crowd whose querulous complaints had so sorely tried the patience of Moses.

After the decisive battle of Hormah, Israel remained more or less in the neighbourhood of the headquarters at Kadesh Barnea, where the Tabernacle was pitched. Many of them may have wandered farther into the wilderness of Paran in search of pasture, but they were becoming nevertheless more and more a united Nation, bound together by common danger from surrounding enemies, and bound together also by worship in common, and obedience to the Law of Jehovah, Whom they were gradually learning to trust in as their Saviour, as well as to fear Him as their Judge if they transgressed His commandments. At Kadesh Miriam died and was buried.

After an undefined period (for " forty years " in Biblical language means a generation rather than an exact measure of time) Moses once more issued the order to concentrate and advance.

Former disastrous experience had shown that the southern ridges of the Negeb were too strongly occupied to justify a second attempt in that direction, and there remained only the alternative—to enter the land from the east, north of the Dead Sea. With this intent, negotiations were entered into with the king of Edom to permit the peaceful passage of Israel through his country, and in anticipation of a favourable answer, the people had already struck their camp and advanced some forty miles north-east to Mount Hor.

And here Aaron received the summons of death. In the sight of the congregation, the aged Priest, attired in his robes of office, his feeble steps supported by his brother Moses and his son Eleazar, slowly ascended the hill of Hor. There he was divested of his sacred garments; the robe, the broidered coat, the ephod and the girdle. He helped to put them upon Eleazar, to clasp upon his shoulders the mystic breastplate, and to crown him with the priestly mitre inscribed " Holiness to the Lord." Together with Moses he laid his hands upon his son in consecration and blessing, as Priest of the Most High God in the room of his father, and then, his work accomplished, he laid him down to die, watched and tended on that strange death-bed by loving eyes and hands until the last

Plate No. 20

THE CONSECRATION OF ELEAZAR AS
HIGH PRIEST

breath was drawn. (*Plate* 20.) On Mount Hor * they buried him. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the House of Israel. (*Num.* xx. 29.)

At this juncture, Arad, king of the Southern Canaanites, noting the northward movement from Kadesh, believed that the Israelites were about to make a second attempt upon his territory, and forestalled the supposed intention by attacking them upon the previous battlefield of Hormah, with woeful results to himself, for the Lord hearkened unto the voice of Israel and delivered up the Canaanites; and they utterly destroyed them and their cities. (*Num.* xxi. 3.) Why this advantage was not followed up and a passage to Canaan forced from the south is not explained; but so it was that when the reply received from Edom was a curt refusal to allow Israel to pass through his borders, Moses gave the discouraging order to march southwards from Mount Hor to the head of the Gulf of Akaba so as to skirt the border of Edom by Ezion and Elath, and thence to follow its eastern frontier and that of Moab northwards to the head-waters of Arnon; thereby adding to the journey about two hundred miles of toilsome desert march. And the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. (*Num.* xxi. 4.)

Like their fathers, they broke into open murmurings, and although the chronicler expresses indignation and states that the Almighty punished them for their lack of faith by sending poisonous vipers amongst them, it is difficult to withhold a certain amount of sympathy from the weary, half-starved travellers, searching in vain for water for their thirsty flocks and herds.

They nearly completed their circuit of the two neutral countries when they arrived on the banks of the River Zered, where the Moabites gave them a grudging permission to pass through a corner of their territory to the Arnon, and after some demur consented to sell them a needful supply of provisions and water.

Arrived at Arnon, the frontier of the Amorites, Moses sought to enter into similar negotiations with King Sihon for peaceful passage through his territory, but, rashly presuming upon what he believed to be the timidity of the Hebrews, he refused. The circumstances here, however, were different. There was no possible alternative save that of forcing an entrance. This was accordingly done, and with surprising results; for not only were the Amorites defeated at the first encounter at Jahaz, but Israel, swiftly following up their first advantage, gave their adversaries no time to reform their shattered forces, and converted the retreat into a rout. The cities afforded no shelter. They yielded one after another, including Heshbon, the capital of Sihon the king.

Panic overtook the Amorites. Og, the king of Bashan, was as unsuccessful

* The Mount Hor here referred to is not that identified by Josephus, which is near Petra and is therefore remote from the route otherwise indicated. The Hor of some modern scholars is situated about 30 miles N.E. of Kadesh, and half-way between that place and the Dead Sea.

as his ally in arresting the wave of conquest, and suffered overwhelming defeat at Edrei, north of the River Yarmuk. The Israelites, however, in view of the arduous enterprise which lay before them, did not attempt to occupy this northern kingdom, but, content with the prestige inspired by their raid, and with the spoil they had acquired, prudently retired to the line of the Jabbok and consolidated their conquest of Gilead.

During this campaign the men of Reuben and Gad, tribes rich in cattle, had noted that Gilead provided good grazing land; and they accordingly approached Moses and the princes of the congregation, with a plea that this district should be assigned to them for a possession. After some demur the petition was granted, on condition that the men of military age should continue to fight side by side with their comrades, until their claims also were satisfied and their inheritances secured.

Balak, King of Moab, had watched this achievement with mixed feelings of elation and fear. He had hoped that the Israelites' success might mean the restoration of the territory of which he had been deprived by Sihon, but when this prospect became fainter, and he saw that the Israelites evidently intended to retain what they had conquered, he began to fear that they might cast covetous eyes upon Moab as well, and in self-defence he sent to Mesopotamia to hire the services of a celebrated enchanter and seer named Balaam, whose curse, it was to be hoped, might have the effect of paralysing the victorious career of these dreaded intruders.

When Balaam arrived, however, it appeared that he knew enough of the God of Israel to dread His power, and to fear to incur His displeasure by disobeying His commands should these be laid upon him. Uncertain of the issue, but anxious to earn if possible the reward offered by Balak, Balaam caused altar after altar to be erected and sacrifices to be offered—presumably to the god Chemosh —on the various headlands overlooking the Israelites now encamped in the plain of Shittim. But on each occasion, when the soothsayer entered into the condition of trance, and Balak waited hopefully for a stream of curses and blighting maledictions upon his enemies, so surely was he compelled to listen instead to blessings upon them, and promises of blessing, uttered in the Name of Jehovah. (*Plate* 21.)

After this failure, it would appear that Balaam made a second effort to work the destruction of Israel. He counselled Balak to feign friendship and alliance with his neighbours, and to allure them to sin against their God by participating in the luxurious rites of the worship of Baal-of-Peor. Midian also shared in this iniquity of sensual indulgence, and was a snare to Israel, so that, according to the Scripture narrative, an expedition was Divinely ordered to be sent by Israel against their former friends and allies, whereby the Midianites were severely punished, their princes slain, and their possessions captured. In this battle it is recorded that Balaam also was killed.

PLATE NO. 21

BALAAM BLESSING ISRAEL

X

JOSHUA TAKES POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND

THE time had now come for the final advance across Jordan, and into the land of Canaan itself. But who was to be the leader? The time had also come, alas! when the man who had guided the people of Israel thus far, ruling them wisely and well, teaching them, pleading with and for them as a father with wayward children, must resign his authority into the hands of Him Who entrusted him with it.

It was obvious that for an enterprise of such magnitude as that which was to be undertaken, choice must be made of a man upright in the sight of the Lord, of approved courage, and possessed of civil as well as of military capacity.

Hitherto one man only had displayed the necessary qualifications, Joshua the son of Nun. He possessed them, however, in full measure, and he had enjoyed, moreover, the implicit trust and confidence of Moses, whom he had served loyally for a generation, through the many trials and difficulties which they had faced together.

Joshua, therefore, was chosen. He was conducted to the Tabernacle, and there in the presence of the congregation he was solemnly consecrated by Moses and by Eleazar the priest to be leader of the hosts of the Lord in the room of his master.

After this, as it is written in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses addressed the people for the last time. Allowing for the expansions of a later date, the book doubtless contains many of the recorded words of the Lawgiver of Israel. He reviews the past history of the Nation since the Exodus, and recounts the blessings which it has enjoyed. He solemnly warns the people that their prosperity is absolutely dependent upon national obedience to the Law of Jehovah. and in heart-stirring words he exhorts them to faithfulness.

Then, his work accomplished, Moses, the Lawgiver of Israel, the last of his generation, stood alone upon the promontory of Nebo and gazed for the last time upon the Land of Promise, to whose border he had conducted his people in safety, but which he himself might never enter. And Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord, and He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab over against Beth Peor, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. . . . And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses whom the Lord knew face to face. (*Deut.* xxxiv. 5, 6, 10.) And it may be said of him with no less truth, that among all the heroes and patriots of Israel, the figure of Moses stands pre-eminent.

At an age when most men would think of laying down the burden of life—for he was eighty years old when he stood before Pharaoh—Moses, at the summons of God, accepted the burden of a task the magnitude of which can hardly be exaggerated. He found his fellow-countrymen in Egypt a disunited race of spiritless slaves who had, to a great extent, lost the religion of their fathers. He led them forth from bondage. He taught them, and gave them the Law of Jehovah; and in the course of a generation, in spite of opposition and many sore discouragements, he made of them a great Nation, united under the sovereignty of the God of Israel, in Whose power, and by Whose guidance, his own humility and misgiving had turned to confidence and strength.

When the days of mourning for Moses were accomplished, Joshua addressed himself to the task of crossing the river by the fords of Jordan over against Jericho, for that city was the key to the military situation, commanding as it did the chief trade routes in the district, and its reduction was essential.

The time of year seemed unpropitious for the expedition, for although Jordan is readily fordable when its water is low, the passage is not without danger at other times, and often impossible for flocks and herds. But owing to some providential but unexplained cause—possibly a landslip higher up the river—the waters were dammed back for a sufficient length of time to admit of the multitude getting swiftly and safely across.

And, lest the people should forget to Whom they owed their safety, the priests, bearing the Ark, which was the visible emblem of the Presence of Jehovah, stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan; while twelve men, from every tribe a man, removed from the river-bed, and transferred to the western bank, stones wherewith they built an altar unto the Lord at Gilgal, their first halting-place. (*Plate* 22.)

Spies were sent into Jericho to ascertain the defences of the place and the spirit of the inhabitants, and returned with the report that the former were weak, and that the people of the whole land were panic-stricken. This was encouraging, for though the Hebrew mechanics had doubtless been busy for many years in arming their fighting men with personal weapons and armour, the storming of strong fortifications in the face of determined opposition was a serious undertaking for inexperienced troops unequipped with engines of war. But prestige on the one side and superstitious terror on the other supplied what was lacking in engineering science. Day after day the nervous apprehension of the inhabitants increased as they watched the ominous procession of the Ark of the Lord slowly encircling the walls of the city, preceded and followed by the hosts of Israel, the portentous silence broken only at intervals by blasts of the priests' trumpets; so that when at last, and with a great shout, the attack was delivered, the defence collapsed like a broken reed, and the Hebrews captured the city with such ease that, as it was afterwards described in the annals of their

PLATE No. 22

THE PASSAGE OF JORDAN

PLATE No. 23
THE DESTRUCTION OF JERICHO

military achievements, " It came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city." (*Joshua*, vi. 20.)

The order had gone forth in the Name of the Lord, that " the city should be accursed, even it and all that were therein, to the Lord," and it is duly recorded that in obedience to this command, they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and ass, with the edge of the sword. (*Joshua*, vi. 17, 21.) (*Plate* 23.)

Such wholesale and merciless extermination of a conquered and helpless people—the innocent with the guilty—is repugnant to us who believe we better understand the mind of God as it was more fully revealed at a later date—Behold all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sinneth it shall die. (*Ezek.* xviii. 4.) But it is to be remembered that at this period of mental and spiritual development the individuality of a man was supposed to include that also of every living creature that belonged to him; and this at least the prophets and leaders of Israel knew full well, that only by keeping absolutely free from the temptations offered by admixture with the pagan population of the land, could this chosen people preserve, in its integrity and sanctity, the Faith to which they had so recently sworn allegiance.

That the Hebrews were not naturally merciless is shown by the difficulty experienced in securing obedience to these stern decrees, and that this was, on the contrary, believed to be a religious duty is sufficiently proved by the fact that they were allowed to derive no personal benefit from the spoil of the cities which they captured, everything of value which was not utterly destroyed being consecrated to the Lord.

These principles were markedly illustrated immediately after the fall of Jericho; for Achan of the Tribe of Judah, having been found guilty of taking of " the accursed thing "—rich raiment, silver and gold—was stoned to death for his crime, involving in his doom that also of his whole family. As it is written, " Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. . . . And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day." (*Joshua*, vii. 24–26.)

To this sin was attributed the failure of an attack upon the town of Ai, the first check which the Israelites had hitherto sustained in their career of conquest, and it may even have contributed in some measure to the separation

which now took place between Judah (which was the tribe of Achan) and the rest of Israel. Be that as it may, Judah, with the assistance of the men of Simeon, was duly authorized to attempt, on its own account, the occupation of the territory assigned by lot to these two tribes, and which extended from Jerusalem southwards as far as to Kadesh, and east and west from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean.

Accounts vary as to the result of their assault upon Jerusalem, the stronghold of the Jebusites; but with this doubtful exception, the campaign was to a great extent successful. The confederated tribes conquered and consolidated their hold upon the hill country of Judæa, including the cities of Hebron, Hormah, and Kirjath Sepher, and they even effected a raid upon the maritime plain of Philistia; but, as was found to be the case elsewhere, the Israelites failed to maintain a hold upon country favourable for the manœuvring of the chariots and horsemen wherein lay the strength of the disciplined troops of the Canaanites and Philistines.

Meanwhile Joshua, with the main body of the Hebrew army, opened the northern campaign auspiciously. Ascending from Gilgal he succeeded in capturing by stratagem Ai, the city which had frustrated a former direct assault. A force of five thousand men having been first placed in concealment on the west side, Joshua made an open attack upon the opposite front, and then by a feigned retreat succeeded in drawing out the entire garrison in pursuit, thereby opening the way for the ambuscade to gain entrance, practically without resistance. The smoke of the burning city was the signal for Joshua's troops to turn upon their pursuers, who, attacked both in front and in rear, were speedily annihilated, and the inhabitants put to the sword.

The neighbouring town of Bethel fell by the treachery of one of its own men who was captured by an Israelitish picket and induced to show them a concealed entrance whereby access was gained to the place, with the usual fatal consequences to the population.

Joshua was not yet ready, however, for a prolonged campaign. After the destruction of the cities in his immediate neighbourhood he retired to his base at Gilgal to complete his preparations for a northern expedition; and while in camp there, an incident occurred which had far-reaching results.

Four confederated cities, Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim, alarmed by the successes of the invaders, sent an embassy to make overtures of friendship with Israel. Arrived at Gilgal, these men represented themselves as citizens of a far country, induced to seek this alliance on account of the fame of the God of the Israelites Who had wrought such wonders on their behalf; and in proof of the distance they had journeyed, they exhibited patched wine-skins, clouted shoes, and dry mouldy bread which had been drawn hot from the oven when they started. (*Plate* 24.)

PLATE NO. 24

JOSHUA'S TREATY WITH THE MEN OF GIBEON

[illegible] Exciplined troops of the Canaanites [illegible]

Joshua, busy with what seemed more important matters, asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord, and Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them. (*Joshua*, ix. 15.)

Three days later the Israelites discovered the truth of the deception that had been practised upon them, and that these "Hivites" were in reality their immediate neighbours. They were furious, of course, but restrained by their oath, they could take no vengeance upon the Gibeonites and their friends, further than that of subjecting them to bondage. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose. (*Joshua*, ix. 27.)

This independent action and defection of the Gibeonites excited in turn the wrath of the five Amorite chiefs of the southern hill country who gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it. And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly and save us and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us . . . Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly and went up from Gilgal all night. And the Lord discomfited them before Israel, and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goeth up to Beth-horon, and smote them to Azekah and unto Makkedah. (*Joshua*, x. 5, 6, 9, 10.) A hailstorm accelerated the rout of the Amorites, so violent that it slew with hailstones more even than those who perished by the sword.

At nightfall the victory was complete and the scattered remnants of the defeated host were seeking refuge in their fenced cities. Then sang Joshua and his soldiers the triumphant war song inscribed in the lost book of Jasher—

> "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;
> And thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.
> And the sun stood still and the moon stayed,
> Until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies."
>
> (*Joshua*, x. 12, 13.)

Before these enemies had time to recover from their disaster, Joshua swept through the country with his victorious troops. Seven cities of the Amorites fell, one after the other, and practically without resistance; the miserable fate of each being recorded with monotonous reiteration: "And he smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain in it," etc.

The same success attended an expedition subsequently undertaken against a federation of the northern Canaanites. Joshua, whose strategy was characterized by swiftness of movement and the element of surprise, attacked and routed this cumbrous host near the waters of Merom; and he is recorded to have meted out chastisement to their cities and their " kings " similar to that of the cities of the south.

So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war. (*Joshua*, xi. 23.)

by Israel, viz.: On the west of Jordan, Kedesh in [illegible] Hebron; and on the east side Bezer in the portion of Reuben, Ramoth [illegible] and Golan to the north, in Bashan.

PLATE No. 25
THE CITY OF REFUGE

XI

CANAAN ALLOTTED TO THE TWELVE TRIBES

IF the book of Joshua could be accepted as being, strictly speaking, history, from a modern point of view, we should be led to infer that the conquest of the whole country was now completed: but after-events prove that this subjugation was not actually achieved till more than a century afterwards. It must be remembered, however, that the object of the writers or editors of the book of Joshua was not to chronicle events as they happened in regular sequence, but to demonstrate to their countrymen, six hundred years later, the reward that in former times had invariably attended whole-hearted and implicit obedience to the will of Jehovah.

Some of the Israelitish tribes were able indeed to secure a permanent footing in their inheritances, but in the majority of instances occupancy was only effected side by side with, and not to the complete exclusion of, the original population. The tribes of Joseph, however, were so well established in Mount Ephraim as to warrant transference of the Tabernacle with the Sacred Ark from Gilgal to a more central position at Shiloh. The comparative settlement of the country also afforded opportunity for the fulfilment of a Mosaic ordinance hitherto left in abeyance, viz.: the establishment of Cities of Refuge. The punishment of murderers and homicides had been left pretty much to the hazard of private vengeance; but the Law provided for their protection in these privileged towns, until the case should be judged by "the congregation." A murderer, proved to be such, was to be put to death; but he who slew his neighbour by accident or without malicious intent, was safe from the avenger of blood if he effected his escape to one of the appointed sanctuaries and remained within its precincts. (*Plate* 25.)

Six cities were accordingly selected from among those captured and occupied by Israel, viz.: On the west of Jordan, Kedesh in Galilee, Shechem, and Hebron; and on the east side Bezer in the portion of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead, and Golan to the north, in Bashan.

Some time after this division and allotment of territory had been finally adjusted, Joshua, now in extreme old age, and feeling that death was near at hand, summoned to Shechem the elders and leading men of Israel and delivered to them his parting injunctions in a heart-stirring address. He briefly reviewed the history of the past generation, reminding his audience of how Jehovah had fulfilled His Covenant with Israel; that continued prosperity would attend their

loyal allegiance as surely as that His favour would be withdrawn and His wrath incurred by transgression of the Law, in bowing down to other gods and serving them. " Choose you this day," said he, " whom ye will serve." Three times did Joshua repeat his solemn exhortation and warning, and three times did the people answer " God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods." Then Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord to serve Him. And they said, We are witnesses. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the Law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak that was by the Sanctuary of God. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us: it shall therefore be a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God. (*Joshua*, xxiv. 22, 26, 27.)

This is the last recorded act of Joshua, that loyal, true-hearted soldier and minister of God, who had faithfully discharged the duty imposed upon him by Moses his master, and whose leadership had so largely contributed to the welding of Israel into a united nation. And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, which had known all the works of the Lord that He had done for Israel. (*Joshua*, xxiv. 31.)

But after that generation had passed away there arose another, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim : And they forsook the Lord God of their fathers that brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them . . . And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and He sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. (*Judges*, ii. 10–12, 14.)

We marvel that the Israelites should so quickly have fallen away from the faith of their fathers, and so readily have submitted to the domination and tyranny of nations over whom the previous generation had obtained a speedy victory; but the explanation, both of the sin and of its punishment, is to be traced to the failure, already mentioned, to drive out the people of the land.

By the distribution of the tribes throughout the land of Canaan, leaving unsubjugated districts and cities of strength, Israel became, geographically, a disunited nation. The Valley of the Kishon, and a chain of fortresses across the country from Bethshan to Megiddo, severed the northern tribes from those of Joseph in Central Palestine; and these again were separated from the powerful tribe of Judah by the line of Gibeonite cities to which Joshua had rashly granted amnesty. A fourth division of Israel was located in Gilead on the east of

Jordan, not readily accessible to their brethren on the hither side. From a military point of view, therefore, Israel suffered from the same disadvantage of divided force and lack of combination which had laid the country open to the attack of Joshua. And morally, the consequences were disastrous; for joint occupation with the tributary Canaanites inevitably resulted in intimacy with them, intermarriage, and the toleration at first, and then the practice of heathen rites, conjointly with the worship of Jehovah. Geographical division and tribal jealousies were the reason also why these people of the land, where opportunity offered, and the surrounding nations, were able in turn to overcome the Israelites and afflict them until they cried unto the Lord because of the tyranny of their oppressors.

XII

THE RULE OF THE JUDGES

"THEN the Lord raised up judges which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them." (*Judges*, ii. 16.) These "Judges" exercised intermittent jurisdiction over Israel for a period of about two hundred years.* Some of them captured the imagination and allegiance of their countrymen by feats of individual prowess or military skill, and the legends of these national heroes are recorded in full, as they had been narrated or recited for centuries by mothers to their children or by itinerant story-tellers in the bazaars of Israel. The careers of civil judges, on the other hand, such as Tola, Jair, and Ibzan, who played, perhaps, no unimportant part in their time, being less picturesque, are dismissed in so few words, that their names are as unfamiliar as those of the dukes of Edom. But without exception, it is to be noted, the influence and jurisdiction of these men was never national, but local merely; and rarely extended beyond the group of tribes one of which claimed him as a member.

The first instrument of chastisement upon Israel was the King of Mesopotamia, and it is recorded that Israel served him for eight years. Doubtless this temporary conquest affected the whole land and not Israel merely; but Othniel of Judah, the brother of Caleb, and first of the Judges, was the man inspired by God to rid the country of this invader. "And the land had rest forty years."

Then Moab was moved to take advantage of the isolation of the southern tribes, and in alliance with Ammon and Amalek subdued and held the plain of Jordan for eighteen years, until Eglon, the king, was assassinated by Ehud, a Benjamite. Evading capture, Ehud summoned the tribes of Mount Ephraim and by a swift movement interposed his forces between the retreating Moabites and the fords of Jordan, where he attacked and defeated the allied host with great slaughter. And the land had rest, at least in this direction, for no less than eighty years.

About this time the Philistines also came into collision with Israel, and the legend of Shamgar relates that this hero slew six hundred of them with an ox-goad; a statement which may be interpreted as meaning that this implement was used by the followers of Shamgar instead of spears, in defeating their better-armed foes.

* The chronology of the book of Judges cannot be verified, as there is nothing to show whether, in some instances, the government of these magistrates was concurrent or successive.

PLATE No. 26
JAEL AND SISERA

While these things were happening in the south, the northern and central tribes, who also " did evil in the sight of the Lord," were menaced with danger from within by the Canaanites who had been left in possession of the northern portion of the plain of Esdraelon. Jabin, their king, by means of a powerful army commanded by Sisera his captain, turned this menace into a reality, and established dominion over his neighbours in the surrounding hill country. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord : for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel. And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. (*Judges*, iv. 3, 4.)

The patriotic anger of this woman was kindled by the supine submission of her countrymen to the tyranny of Jabin. In words of burning indignation she addressed the people who came up to her for judgment, and such was the influence of her force of character and reputation as a seer, that when, in the Name of the Lord, Deborah summoned Barak from Kadesh to proceed against the common enemy, the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali promptly responded to his call, while Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh sent a contingent from the south.

Barak drew his army together in a strong position on the lower slopes of Mount Tabor, Deborah herself being in command of a detachment from Issachar, while Sisera, confident in his chariots, awaited attack on the plain below. Barak's opportunity came when heavy rain raised the Kishon in flood, turning the plain into a morass. The Israelites swept down in a mighty charge upon the Canaanitish infantry, which, deprived of the customary support of its cavalry and chariots, and probably taken in flank by the brigade of Joseph and Benjamin, broke and fled in wild confusion, either to perish under the swords of their more active enemies, or to be drowned and swept away in the rapidly rising waters of the Kishon. The vaunted chariots proved useless, owing to the state of the ground, and they also were overwhelmed in the general rout.

Sisera, the captain of the host, fled away on his feet, and faint with fatigue, sought refuge in the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber, a Kenite, for the Kenites were neutral at the time. This woman may herself have been an Israelite, and her sympathies therefore entirely with her people; and if so, this would explain, if it cannot excuse, the shameful treachery she displayed towards the wretched man, and her breach of the unwritten law of sanctuary. But she slew him in his sleep, driving into his temples a sharp pin used in fastening together the curtains of the tent. And behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold Sisera lay dead, and the nail was in his temples. (*Judges*, iv. 22.) (*Plate* 26.)

Then sang Deborah and Barak that triumphant song which bears her name,

in which they praise and thank the Lord of Hosts Who had given them the victory, recording the tribes whose loyalty and patriotism had been proved in the day of trial, and casting bitter scorn on those who had been found wanting, who had shirked their duty, and were content to benefit by their brethren's self-sacrifice. The song condones and even praises the deed of Jael, seeing that Israel had benefited thereby in the death of an enemy of the Lord. So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. (*Judges*, v. 31.) And the land was at peace for another generation.

This danger past—and forgotten as usual, for such lessons seldom outlast a generation—the ominous words, so often repeated, appear once more upon the record, " And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord."

This time, the scourge appeared from the desert. Hordes of Midianites (a people by no means so utterly destroyed as might be inferred from Numbers, xxxi.), in alliance with Amalekites and other Bedouin tribes, came up against Israel by the Arabah and the Valley of the Jordan. " As grasshoppers for multitude they came," with their cattle and their camels, destroying the produce of the land; and they " left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor ass." For seven years the Israelites endured this terrorism; but relief was nigh at hand in the person of Gideon, a Manassite of the clan of Abi-ezer.

Roused to execute vengeance upon the murderers of his brothers, and encouraged by a heavenly vision to regard himself as a Divinely-appointed deliverer of his people, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. He proclaimed a holy war against heathenism by destroying the altar and the grove of the local Baal. And he blew a trumpet, and Abi-ezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh . . . and unto Asher, and unto Zebulun and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them. (*Judges*, vi. 34, 35.)

A great host was thus gathered at the ridge of Gilboa, over against the army of the Midianites who were encamped in the plain below the hill of Moreh. But Gideon, strong in faith, and determined to vindicate the power of Jehovah to save by few as well as by many, dismissed two-thirds of his following and reduced the ten thousand which remained to three hundred, by leading them down to the pool of Harod and selecting those only who drank, lifting the water in their hands.

And he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent and retained those three hundred men. . . . And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me and do likewise: and behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that as I do, so shall ye do. So Gideon and the hundred men that were with him came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they blew

Plate No. 27

"THE SWORD OF THE LORD AND OF GIDEON."
PANIC IN THE CAMP OF THE MIDIANITES

the trumpets and brake the pitchers that were in their hands . . . and they cried, " The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." And they stood every man in his place round about the camp : and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host. (*Judges*, vii. 8, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22.) (*Plate* 27.)

Then the rest of Gideon's force pursued after the Midianites to the passage of the Jordan at Beth-barah. But there the panic-stricken army found their retreat interrupted by the Ephraimites, who had been summoned in haste by Gideon to hold the ford. Thousands of the Midianites fell there, including two of their leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. Gideon, with his three hundred, followed after the fugitives " faint yet pursuing." At two cities in Gilead he asked for refreshments for his weary men, and in spite of their refusal, still pressed on until he overtook the fugitives where they rested in fancied security at Karkor. Although the odds were still fifty to one, the gallant little band attacked the foe, who, hearing once more the triumphant shout, " The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," stayed not to count numbers, but continued their flight, leaving captive their kings Zebah and Zalmunna, whom Gideon slew, as they in their day of power had showed no mercy to his brothers. Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon. (*Judges*, viii. 28.)

Had Gideon been personally ambitious, he might have taken advantage of a wave of popularity which would have carried him to the throne of Israel; but, rightly or wrongly, he did not regard the voice of the people as being the Voice of God, and refused kingship for himself and his descendants, saying, " The Lord shall reign over you." The only reward he would accept for his public services was the golden ear-rings of the slain Ishmaelites, which he consecrated to Jehovah, making therewith an ephod * of gold to be placed as a memorial in his native city of Ophrah.

After the death of Gideon, Abimelech, his son by a Canaanitish woman, aspired to the kingship of Israel, which had been refused by his father, and induced the men of Shechem, his mother's city, to support his claim. Having hired a gang of ruffians, he proceeded to Ophrah and massacred his seventy brethren, one only—Jotham by name—succeeding in making his escape. This crime, however, profited him little. His supporters, indeed, made Abimelech king in Shechem, but elsewhere his pretensions received no countenance, and his authority seems to have been purely local. Even in Shechem itself a revolt, possibly incited by the curses and reproaches hurled at the city by Jotham from

* The full meaning of the word ephod is obscure. Originally it refers to a priestly vestment, but as Gideon's " ephod " weighed sixty-one pounds, and as it became an object of adoration, it was probably an image of some kind.

the adjoining heights of Gerizim, drove him to seek refuge in a neighbouring town. Then followed attack and counter-attack, massacres and reprisals, until at last the usurper fell in an assault upon the citadel of Thebez, receiving a death-wound at the hand of a woman who cast a fragment of a millstone upon his head.

After brief mention of two civil judges whose periods of office were undisturbed by war, we read again that the children of Israel, in spite of their many warnings, reverted to the service of strange gods. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hands of the children of Ammon, and into the hands of the Philistines. (*Judges*, x. 7.) The elders of Gilead in despair of finding a fitting leader to deliver them from the oppression of the Ammonites, were obliged to appeal to a noted warrior and outlaw called Jephthah, whom they themselves had formerly driven forth from their midst, as being base-born, and forced to adopt the life of a brigand. And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon and the Lord deliver them before me, shall I be your head? And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, The Lord be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words. (*Judges*, xi. 9, 10.)

In response to the demand of Ammon for restitution of the land which had formerly belonged to them, Jephthah replied to the effect that Israel had conquered it in the strength of Jehovah, and would keep it by the same, unless Chemosh, the god of Ammon, had power to dispossess them. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah . . . and he passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands, and he smote them . . . with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel. (*Judges*, xi. 29, 32, 33.)

But the day of victory that dawned in rejoicing, closed in sorrow and lamentation; for Jephthah, ignorantly believing that the dreadful sacrifices made to Chemosh would also be pleasing to Jehovah, vowed that if the Lord granted victory to his arms he would surely offer as a burnt sacrifice whatsoever came forth from his house to meet him. But alas! this proved to be his daughter—his only child!—who came forth joyfully to greet his return with timbrels and dances. The wretched father dared not go back upon his solemn vow, nor did the innocent victim herself desire him to do so. She said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth. . . . And he did with her according to the vow which he had vowed. (*Judges*, xi. 36, 39.)

After, or during the six years of Jephthah's jurisdiction, three other judges exercised doubtful control, of whom nothing is recorded save that they had very large families.

Meanwhile the Philistines, strong in their federated cities and in the posses-

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Louis enacted a story of lost opportunity, this record of an unheroic " hero,"

PLATE No. 28

SAMSON GRINDING IN PRISON AT GAZA

sion of a well-equipped and disciplined army, had not only kept the south-western Israelites from the occupation of territory which was theirs in theory, but had succeeded in reducing the tribes of Judah and Simeon to a condition of vassalage; while Dan, unable to obtain a footing in the best part of the land assigned to them, had sent an expedition to the north, where they exterminated the inhabitants of the peaceful and defenceless town of Laish, occupying their territory and city, to which they gave the name of their own tribe.

Samson the Danite is an outstanding figure at this time. Possessed of no personal merit, save that of colossal strength, he nevertheless became in the eyes of his countrymen a traditional hero, as was Hercules to the Greeks. Many are the tales recounted of his superhuman strength and prowess, tales which doubtless lost little in marvel during succeeding centuries. But not one of the deeds of Samson, wrought against the Philistines, was actuated by patriotism. No thought was in his mind save revenge for wrongs done to him personally, by those with whom, though enemies to his country, he had nevertheless intermarried and lived on terms of intimacy. The one scene in Samson's life which awakens sympathy is when, betrayed by a woman, we see him blinded and deprived of the strength wherein he trusted, doing the work of an ox in the prison-mill of Gaza, to the scorn and derision of those to whom his name had been one of terror. (*Plate* 28.) It is told of him, that his strength returned in the hour of his death, when, in a last crowning act of vengeance, he overwhelmed in the ruin of the house of Dagon, himself and thousands of his enemies, for whose amusement he had been brought from the prison-house to make them sport.

Thus ended a story of lost opportunity, this record of an unheroic " hero," whose strength was nullified by weakness, of a deliverer who wrought no deliverance.

The lesson intended to be conveyed by the unknown writer of the book of Judges is emphasized by the fact that he nowhere holds these men up as models of virtue, or patterns of righteousness. With their personal conduct he is not concerned. They are simply instruments in the hand of the Lord to effect His mighty purpose. But the writer calls history to witness the fulfilment of the prophecies of Moses and Joshua, that the Lord our God, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, will visit the iniquities of those who worship other gods than Him, setting up idols in their hearts by whatsoever names these may be called; and that He will deliver them in the day in which they truly repent, and return to Him, and serve Him in sincerity and truth.

XIII

THE IDYLL OF RUTH, AND THE STORY OF SAMUEL'S CHILDHOOD

IT is refreshing to turn from these many tales of sin and punishment, and before taking up once more the connected thread of national history, to open the pages of the little book of Ruth, and read one of the most perfect idylls that ever was written. The story has the slenderest possible connection with that history, yet there are few descriptions that we should miss from the sacred library more than that of the pathetic figure of Naomi, the chivalrous kindness and courtesy of Boaz, and the tender love and devotion of Ruth the Moabitess. What unknown author are we to thank for the exquisite words wherewith his heroine consecrates her life to the service of her aged and bereaved relative? Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. (*Ruth*, i. 16, 17.)

Incidentally we are reminded that war and bloodshed were not after all the prevailing condition of the land in the days of the Judges. We breathe instead an atmosphere of peace and plenty, of kindly relations between employer and employed, and of settled legislation. We are presented with a vivid picture of the rural life of Palestine, the same in every detail as has been witnessed by the present writer: the cheerful toil of the reapers in the harvest field; their rest at noon-day in the grateful shade of fig-trees, where each man has hung up his water-bottle, and where a mother has improvised with her veil a little hammock for her baby, suspended from one of the lower branches; and in the background we see the lonely figure of Ruth the stranger, timidly gleaning among the barley sheaves, to add somewhat to the scanty store of food at home.

And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth; and his name was Boaz. And behold Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee. Then said Boaz unto his servant that was over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant . . . answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab. (*Ruth*, ii. 1, 4, 5, 6.) Then Boaz spoke graciously to her, blessing her for her filial conduct, and assuring her of his protection and his favour. (*Plate* 29.)

PLATE No. 29
BOAZ AND RUTH

Plate No. 30

ELI AND SAMUEL.

AND HE SAID, "IT IS THE LORD:
LET HIM DO WHAT SEEMETH HIM GOOD"

The story relates how, when harvest was ended, Boaz redeemed the land that had belonged to Naomi's husband, willingly accepting the implied obligation to take Ruth* to wife, the widow of his kinsman: and the romance concludes with the birth of a son to Boaz and Ruth, a child that restored joy to the desolate heart of Naomi, and who was destined to be the grandfather of David, King of Israel.

Throughout the centuries when the Judges exercised uncertain rule in Israel, the Tabernacle of the Lord abode in Shiloh, and in the days of Samson was in charge of Eli the priest, who also judged the people of Ephraim and the country adjoining. Respected for his personal character, Eli's influence was nevertheless counteracted by the misconduct of his sons, whose vicious life, unrestrained in youth by their father, embittered his old age, and degraded the sanctity of the priesthood in the eyes of the people, causing them to abhor the offering of the Lord.

Among those who came up to worship the Lord at Shiloh was a certain Ephraimite called Elkanah, with his wife Hannah, who brought her little son to Eli, in fulfilment of a vow that if the Lord would grant her a son, she would dedicate him to the service of the Lord from his birth. And Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little coat and brought it to him from year to year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. (1 *Sam.* ii. 18, 19.)

It is related that in the watches of the night, the Voice of the Lord awakened Samuel from sleep, with a message to Eli of the doom that had been pronounced against him and his house, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision. Then Eli called Samuel and said, Samuel, my son. And he answered, Here am I. And he said, What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me. . . . And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good. And Samuel grew and the Lord was with him. And all Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord. (1 *Sam.* iii. 13, 15–20.) (*Plate* 30.)

Once more the Philistines prepared to invade Israel, directing their attack against the coasts of Ephraim; and Israel prepared to meet them at Aphek. The conflict that ensued, though indecisive, ended to the advantage of the enemy and Israel retired discomfited to their camp. Then they brought the Ark of the Lord from Shiloh, in superstitious confidence that its presence with the army would ensure them victory. But again they were smitten before the Philistines, this time with a very great slaughter, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas,

* The description of the transfer of property before witnesses in the gate of the city, recalls a similar scene in earlier times, when Abraham purchased the field of Machpelah.

were slain and the Ark of the Lord was taken. And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army and came to Shiloh with his clothes rent. And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching : for his heart trembled for the Ark of God. . . . Now Eli was ninety and eight years old, and his eyes were dim that he could not see. . . . And the messenger said, Israel is fled before the Philistines. . . . And thy two sons, Hophni and Phineas, are dead, and the Ark of God is taken. And it came to pass when he made mention of the Ark of God, that Eli fell from off the seat and his neck brake, and he died : for he was an old man and heavy. (1 *Sam.* iv. 12, 13, 15, 17, 18.)

XIV

THE LAST OF THE JUDGES AND THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL

THE loss of the sacred treasure of Israel brought no gain to its captors. They carried it first in triumph to the temple of Dagon in Ashdod, but the image of Dagon was found in the morning prostrate and broken before the Ark, and the people of the city were smitten with a sore disease. From place to place they carried the ominous trophy, disease and death following in its train, until the cry of the people went up to Heaven and they besought their rulers to "send away the Ark of the God of Israel and let it go again to His own place." And they did so, laying the Ark of the Lord, together with a trespass offering of gold, upon a new cart, drawn by kine upon whose necks no yoke had yet been laid. And the kine took the straight way to Bethshemesh and went along the highway lowing as they went. And they of Bethshemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes and saw the Ark, and rejoiced to see it. And the Ark of the Lord came into the field of Joshua, a Bethshemite, and stood there where there was a great stone. (1 *Sam.* vi. 12–14.) And the men of Kirjath-Jearim came and fetched up the Ark of the Lord and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill (1 *Sam.* vii. 1), where it remained until its removal to Jerusalem many years later; the Tabernacle (or temple) of Shiloh having evidently been destroyed at this time by the Philistines.

And Samuel, now grown to man's estate, the last of the "Judges," exercised jurisdiction over a limited section of central Israel and Judah, making an annual circuit from his house at Ramah to the high places of Gilgal, Bethel, and Mizpeh. After twenty years of humiliation, during which southern Israel seems to have shown contrition for their sins, Samuel summoned them to Mizpeh and repeated the steadfast promise that true penitence would ensure deliverance by the hand of the Almighty. And they fasted on that day and said there,* We have sinned against the Lord. And when the Philistines heard of the gathering at Mizpeh they went up against Israel. And Samuel made a burnt offering and cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him. With renewed courage Israel attacked their foes on the site of their former defeat at Ebenezer, and achieved a victory that resulted at least in temporary relief from the burden of the oppressor.

* Mizpeh is not far from Kirjath-Jearim, situated on a hill higher up and on the opposite side of the valley.

But the experience of centuries had proved to the thoughtful men of Israel that if they were ever to become a strong and united nation, this could never be accomplished under the existing system of government, or rather lack of system. Again and again, therefore, they appealed to Samuel to give them a king to rule over them; and the Prophet, after a lifetime's struggle to maintain the theory of a pure theocracy, was, in his latter days, led to see that a righteous monarch might after all be the best guarantee of national righteousness. Such a man Samuel believed he had found in the person of Saul, the son of a leading family in Benjamin, who came to him at an unnamed town in Judah, in the course of his search for some asses of his father's which had been lost. Impressed at first, doubtless, by the grandeur of his personal appearance, Samuel's favourable opinion was confirmed by the modesty and wisdom that Saul displayed on further acquaintance, and it was borne in upon the Seer that this was the man selected by God Himself to be king over Israel. Privately consecrated by the ceremony of anointing, on the following morning Saul departed to his home, evidently with sore misgiving as to his fitness for the exalted office to which he had been dedicated. For although a company of prophets* met him, and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them (1 *Sam.* x. 10), he made no mention of these incidents, and when Samuel summoned the people together at Mizpeh, to announce to them the choice which he had made, Saul even endeavoured to evade the greatness thrust upon him, by concealing himself.

But the Spirit of the Lord was nevertheless with the newly-made king, and roused him to take vigorous action, when news arrived from Gilead that the inhabitants of Jabesh were in deadly peril from the assault of the king of Ammon. Saul promptly sent messengers throughout Israel summoning its men to meet him at Bezek, and threatening punishment if they failed to do so. With the army thus collected Saul crossed the Jordan, and, dividing his force, fell upon the enemy from three sides, taking them by surprise in the morning watch. The Ammonites were routed with great loss, and the city was delivered.

This success confirmed the hesitating allegiance of Israel to a king in whose selection they had had no voice. At the word of Samuel they proceeded to Gilgal and there with acclamation they ratified the establishment of the kingdom, making sacrifices to the Lord.

But Saul's sovereignty was still nominal, and it had to withstand a severer test

* These "prophets" were men who had early displayed gifts of divination, or second sight. Under the influence of music or the dance, they were roused to semi-religious frenzy ending in trance; in which condition their utterances were regarded as "prophesying" and accepted as the voice of God. Tradition states that Samuel was the foreman of prophetic guilds or schools, in which these gifts were disciplined and trained, and from which, from time to time, true prophets or teachers of righteousness emerged, while others attained no greater success than that of being local seers or soothsayers.

PLATE No. 31

JONATHAN DEFYING THE OUTPOSTS OF THE PHILISTINES

before it could be regarded as a reality. Israel had yet to be freed from the burden of Philistia, and to this end Saul applied himself, training, as the nucleus of an army, a chosen band of three thousand Benjamites, the only force on which he could rely in the hour of trial; two thousand of these he retained under his own command, and the remaining thousand he placed in garrison under his son Jonathan at Gibeah.

Meanwhile, the Philistines, relying upon the general disarmament of Israel, had contented themselves with maintaining a corps of observation at Geba in the heart of the disaffected country; but when Jonathan opened the campaign by storming this isolated garrison, the Philistines sent a large army to crush the rising rebellion, the bulk of which operated in Ephraim, but with a division resting on Michmash.

Saul then summoned all Israel to meet him at the sanctuary of Gilgal where he impatiently awaited the arrival of Samuel, who had promised to come within a week to hallow the enterprise by offering sacrifice to the Lord. But as the appointed time passed by and Samuel did not appear, and as the assembled levies of Israel were melting away in fear, Saul " forced himself," as he expressed it, and offered a burnt sacrifice, thereby incurring the stern rebuke of the Prophet, on his return from the districts where he had doubtless been engaged in confirming the wavering courage of his countrymen.

With the six hundred men to which his force had now been reduced by desertion, Saul marched to reinforce his son, who was holding in check at Geba a vastly superior body of the enemy, encamped at Michmash on the opposite side of the narrow valley. The position of Geba is naturally so strong that the Philistines hesitated to force it, and contented themselves meanwhile with sending out marauding bands to ravage the country in three directions, and by placing outposts on the cliffs where the valley narrows to a gorge eastwards, in observation of the numerous caves which were there garrisoned by the Benjamites.

Fired with a gallant spirit of adventure, Jonathan said to the young man who bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us; for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few, and his armour-bearer said unto him, Behold, I am with thee according to thy heart. (1 *Sam.* xiv. 6, 7.) So the two youths proceeded alone down the gorge of Michmash in full view of the Philistine pickets posted on the heights, who jeered at them, and shouted to them to come up and they would show them something worth seeing. (*Plate* 31.) Taking this invitation for Divine sanction upon their daring exploit, Jonathan and his follower disappeared from sight among the rocks and boulders at the foot of the cliff, and being cragsmen from their boyhood, and, doubtless, perfectly familiar with the ground, they made the perilous ascent in silence, and fell upon the amazed and

terrified Philistines who were lounging about in fancied security. Those who escaped immediate slaughter fled towards Michmash, pursued by Jonathan and his fellow tribesmen, who, seeing what had occurred, swarmed like angry bees from the caverns and fastnesses of the glen to the support of their young leader. The terror of the fugitives imparted itself to their comrades of the adjoining post, and infected the main body itself, which being wholly unprepared for a flank attack was thrown into the wildest confusion—a confusion which was increased by the defection of the Ephraimites who had been forced to join the ranks of the Philistines, and who now turned their swords against their masters.

Sentinels posted at Migron, the advanced post of the Geba position, reported what they had noticed, but Saul, ignorant of the true cause, suspected that the commotion was merely a feint on the part of the enemy to entice him from his vantage ground, and hesitated to attack until he had consulted the oracle of God : but when no doubt remained that the enemy were actually in retreat, he crossed the valley with all his forces and turned the retreat into a headlong rout, pursuing and slaughtering the enemy down the valley of Aijalon till nightfall.

This defeat was shortly followed by the sullen retirement of the Philistine troops in Mount Ephraim, who could no longer look for a successful issue to a campaign which had opened so disastrously.

The chronicler does not relate the ensuing events of the war, but although the victory above described was not decisive, Saul was evidently able to keep the inveterate enemy of Israel at arm's length, while he turned his attention to the consolidation of his kingdom, and the reduction of foes on its eastern and southern borders. In the latter enterprise he was completely successful, for Saul was a great soldier, but, as Samuel had dreaded from the first, he failed to fulfil the higher duties of kingship. Saul's very success as a military leader turned away his heart from following the Lord. He did not fulfil his earlier promise, and proved intractable to admonition. Hence arose inevitable friction between Saul and the man who had placed him upon the throne of Israel; for Samuel, with a spirit as masterful as his own, may perhaps have failed to temper duty with wisdom and tact, in administering his stern rebukes.

This lamentable breach between former friends came to an open rupture when, on his victorious return from an expedition against the Amalekites, whom Samuel had doomed to utter destruction, Saul was found not only to have spared Agag their king, but to have retained everything of value as the spoils of war, destroying only what was worthless. Saul in excuse of his fault laid the blame upon the people, who had, as he said, spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice unto the Lord. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from

PLATE No. 32

SAMUEL SLAYING AGAG BEFORE

THE LORD AT GILGAL

Plate No. 32

SAMUEL SLAYING AGAG BEFORE
THE LORD AT GILGAL

being king. . . . Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. (1 *Sam.* xv. 22, 23, 32, 33.) (*Plate* 32.)

Thereafter Samuel departed to his house at Ramah, and though he " mourned for Saul," the estrangement between them was complete, nor could Samuel be induced to reverse the judgment he had pronounced. From that day he prayerfully set himself to find a man more after the mind of God than the king who had so bitterly disappointed his hopes.

passage would lay them open to the danger of a flank attack

Plate No. 34
DAVID PLAYING ON THE HARP
BEFORE SAUL

but which at other times settled down upon his spirit in fits of brooding and dangerous melancholy.

Someone among Saul's officers suggested that music might dispel the evil spirit, and another remembered having heard that a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite was a notable musician and harpist. With Saul's sanction David was accordingly sent for. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him. (1 *Sam.* xvi. 23.) (*Plate* 34.)

The revolt of the northern clans of Judah from the domination of their overlords threatened at this time to spread southwards, and the Philistines bestirred themselves to check the movement by sending an expedition into Israel by the valley of Elah, which extends for about six miles through the low hills of the Shephelah, the district separating the plain of Philistia from the uplands of Judæa. Thus far their passage was unchallenged, but at the head of the valley where it branches into two " wadies " the enemy received an unexpected check. With the unerring eye of a skilled tactician, Saul had drawn up his army on the face of the hill commanding the northern branch of the valley and the road, or rather the way, to Bethlehem, leaving the southern valley open; a position of no great natural strength, but one which, fortified by palisades and entrenchments, bade defiance to attacks of the enemy's chariots. The open valley leading southwards towards Hebron was useless to the Philistines, as that part of the country was already in their hands, and any attempt to force the northern passage would lay them open to the danger of a flank attack from Saul's active hillmen, on ground where there was no room for chariots to manœuvre.

Thus the two armies remained for no less than six weeks facing each other watchfully, the Philistines encamped at Socoh, with less than a mile of ploughland separating their lines from Saul's army which had its headquarters at Beth-Nettif, a village on the hill behind. Constant skirmishing took place, especially at the weakest part of the Hebrew line below Beth-Nettif, but Saul was too wary to be drawn into a general engagement, even when Goliath, a swaggering giant from Gath, came daily and shouted insulting messages to the men of Israel, challenging them to stake the issue on the arbitrament of single combat.

Jesse's three eldest sons were with the army of Saul, and the old chief, anxious for news from the front, sent David across the hills with provisions for them, and a present to their commanding officer. The youth arrived in time to hear the daily challenge of the Philistine champion, and his spirit was roused to indignation that as yet no man had been found with courage to face this bravo who had dared to defy the God of Israel. Nor did he hesitate to express this feeling in the ears of bystanders. Heedless of the angry rebuke of his brothers, David obeyed the summons of the king to whom his words had been repeated, and to him he modestly but confidently expressed his readiness to undertake the

task of humbling the insolent pride of the Philistine, being well assured that as the man had defied the armies of the living God, his fate would be that of the wild beasts that David had slain in defence of his flocks. Reassured by the youth's exalted enthusiasm, Saul blessed his enterprise and offered to arm him with his own mail and weapons, but David finding on trial that they impeded his activity, put them off him, preferring to rely only upon the simple weapons to which he was accustomed, the shepherd's mace and sling.

How well we can picture the scene which followed! We watch the solitary figure of an athletic youth descending the slope of the rocky hill, every eye fixed upon him in breathless attention as he crosses the dry water-course, and deliberately selects a few water-smoothed pebbles, which he slips into the leathern pouch at his waist. As he clears the bushes and advances on the opposite side, his gigantic adversary, his brasen panoply glittering in the sun, approaches and halts in incredulous amazement when he notes the youth and equipment of the champion of Israel, and he curses him with furious contempt. Then in words of ringing defiance, audible to the hostile army which had crept nearer, ready to take advantage of the issue so confidently expected, David proclaims his reliance, not on his own prowess but on the arm of the God of Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands. . . . And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone and smote the Philistine and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David. (1 *Sam.* xvii. 47, 49, 50.) Therefore David took the sword of Goliath from its sheath and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they were filled with dismay. (*Plate* 35.)

Saul promptly seized the moment of opportunity and gave orders for a charge of his whole army. With a ringing shout of assured victory the clans of Israel leapt from their trenches and swept across the intervening ground in a torrent of irresistible fury against the serried ranks of the enemy. Shaken already in nerve by the ominous portent of their champion's fall, the Philistines were wholly unable to resist the shock of that fierce onset. Their lines were penetrated; they turned and fled; while the brigade of chariots which, had they remained steady, might even now have changed the fortune of the day, were similarly seized with terror, and only added to the disaster in their frantic efforts to escape. Down the fatal valley, and beyond it, even to the gates of Ekron and of Gath, the Israelites pursued their enemy, slaughtering as they went. The victory was complete.

When David first appeared before Saul in his tent, the king had no recol-

Plate No. 35
DAVID AND GOLIATH

lection of having seen him before. When the evil spirit of melancholy clouded his intellect, he was probably conscious only of the music, without taking note of the musician, and now, as he watched the gallant figure of the young shepherd setting forth on his high enterprise, Saul inquired of Abner, the captain of his host, whose son the youth might be. But neither Abner nor any of his staff knew him; and it was not until David returned to the camp with the head of Goliath in his hand, that Saul learned his parentage. And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

The exploit of the youth who had thus suddenly leapt into fame aroused in Jonathan nothing but generous admiration. He recognized in David a spirit akin to his own, and from that hour the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David in a life-long friendship, loyal and true, proof against all trial. It stood the test of separation, and the sterner trial of the incurred distrust and enmity of his own father, and even that of the knowledge that David and not he himself was destined to sit upon the throne of Israel.

None knew better than Saul how to appreciate and reward a gallant deed of arms. He insisted on retaining David on his personal staff, and he entrusted the young officer with the charge of several minor military expeditions, all of which he conducted successfully, earning thereby the approval of the king and increasing popularity both in Israel and in Judah.

Not a trace of jealousy seems to have tinged the mind of Saul, until, in an unlucky moment, some Judæan poet composed a foolish song in praise of their local hero, to the effect that Saul had slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands; a sentiment as unjust as it was absurd, but which nevertheless did not prevent the song attaining wide popularity.

Had Saul been a healthy-minded man, he would of course have estimated the paltry incident at its passing value, but as it was, "the saying displeased him," and he allowed it to rankle in his memory and to awaken jealousy which flamed up into active hatred when his malady returned and obscured his reason: so that when David played with his hand as at other times, Saul cast the javelin that was in his hand; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice. (1 *Sam.* xviii. 10, 11.)

A lurking fear of David began now to mingle with Saul's enmity, and he sought to compass his destruction by indirect means. Noting the love that his daughter Michal bare to David, Saul caused it to be known to the young man that he so favoured the alliance, that he would demand no greater dowry than trophies from the bodies of two hundred slain Philistines. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hands of the Philistines. David, however, speedily returned from his raid in safety, and paid the ghastly dowry in full tale; a

success which earned him a wife, and at the same time the enduring, instead of the fitful, enmity of her father.

Immediate danger was with difficulty averted by Jonathan's courageous advocacy of his friend; but David's further military successes, on the renewal of the war, revived the slumbering animosity of the king. He sent assassins to murder David in his house; and this peril he barely evaded by escaping through a window, with the assistance of Michal his wife, and fleeing under cover of night to Naioth, near Ramah, where Samuel had established a school of "Sons of the Prophets." Thence he was able to send a message to Jonathan. The two friends met and anxiously discussed the situation, and it was agreed that in the meantime David should remain concealed, until Jonathan observed his father's temper on missing David from his accustomed place at table. The result confirmed their worst forebodings. On Saul's jealously demanding the reason of David's absence from the feast, Jonathan drew his father's wrath upon himself by pleading the excuse of a family sacrifice at Bethlehem. He was fiercely upbraided with befriending and shielding a traitor; and he narrowly escaped death from the javelin hurled at him by King Saul in a paroxysm of fury, when he boldly refused to betray David to his death, and demanded proof of the odious charge laid against him.

So Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and repaired to the place where David lay hidden. There the friends met once more and parted. And they kissed one another, and wept one with another. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city. (1 *Sam.* xx. 41, 42.)

XVI

DAVID'S BAND OF OUTLAWS DEFEND ISRAEL'S BORDERS

FROM that hour David, the king's son-in-law, the most popular man in Israel, was a fugitive and an outlaw, to whom none dare give food or shelter on penalty of death. He lacked the barest necessities of life. Believing that Saul would not, even in his fury, commit the sin of sacrilege against the person of the high priest, David induced Ahimelech, who was wholly ignorant of his disgrace at court, to give him, as provision for his journey, the consecrated shew-bread, of which, according to the strict letter of the law, only the priests might partake.

But whither should he go? Nowhere in his own country could the solitary fugitive feel himself safe from pursuit and capture. He fled, therefore, to Gath, where, however, he was promptly recognized in spite of the change that years had wrought in his appearance, and where he barely escaped death by feigning idiocy. After all, might he not be safer nearer home? There were desolate wildernesses and fastnesses enough in Judæa itself where a fugitive might defy pursuit and discovery. Such a refuge was the cavern of Adullam close at hand by the Shephelah; and thither David betook himself. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men. (1 *Sam.* xxii. 2.)

Prudence demanded that the band of outlaws should shift their headquarters from time to time, and we next hear of them as lurking in the wooded district of Hareth, where they were joined by a terror-stricken fugitive, Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, sole survivor of the indiscriminate slaughter of the priests of Nob, ordered by Saul and executed by a foreigner, as no Israelite would consent to commit such sacrilege. It would have been safer to deprive a tiger of his prey than to cross the despot in his present mood; and this the chief priest had unwittingly done by assisting David to escape; thereby incurring not his own death penalty only, but that also of the entire community of which he was the head.

In one place only, viz., among the wild and inaccessible cliffs and "rocks of the wild goats" which surround the tiny oasis of Engedi and overhang the desolate shores of the Dead Sea, was David safe from the pursuit of the relentless enemy who left no stone unturned to compass his destruction; but a life of forced inactivity in this dreary spot suited neither the adventurous spirit of David, nor that of his followers who owned his leadership and recognized no other law

than his command. To Engedi, therefore, they only retired when pursuit could be avoided by no other means; for David steadily refused to oppose the king with armed resistance. (*Plate* 36.)

The chronicler is so interested in the personality of David, that in the latter half of the first book of Samuel, the life of the nation and its king, and other matters of public interest, with the exception of the last scene, are only referred to incidentally as they happen to affect the fortunes of his hero : but it may be gathered that, during this period, the borders of Israel were kept as safe from the incursions of the Philistines and of the predatory desert tribes on the south by David, the guerilla chief, as they had formerly been when he held the king's commission. His difficulties were vastly increased however, for he had greater cause to fear betrayal at the hands of his own tribesmen, than the danger of declared enemies. David dared not remain at Keilah, a city of Judah which he had saved from a Philistine raid, knowing that its inhabitants would inevitably betray him to the king, should he follow thither in pursuit; and the clans of the south country, jealous of the predominance of the house of Bethlehem, voluntarily offered to deliver David into the king's hands should an expedition be sent to capture him in the wilderness of Ziph, a district south of Hebron where he was known to be in hiding.

It is true that the presence of David and his band afforded a certain guarantee of security from the depredations of foreign marauders; yet the district thus favoured probably thought they could well have dispensed with such protection, seeing that David exacted contributions for the maintenance of six hundred men, from the farmers and sheep owners, and woe betide the man that refused to pay his share.

On one such occasion wholesale destruction of life and property was only averted by the presence of mind of Abigail, the wife of Nabal, of Carmel-in-Judah. Having heard of the churlish refusal of her husband to supply David with provisions, she lost no time in lading a train of asses with bread, meat, dried fruit, and wine, and in setting forth to meet David, humbling herself before him for the fault of her husband. Her beauty and distress so wrought upon the angry man that he forgave Nabal for her sake, and he said, Blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand. For in very deed, except thou hadst hasted and come to meet me, there had not been left by morning a male of the house of Nabal. (1 *Sam.* xxv. 33, 34.) Shortly after this, however, Nabal died a natural death, and David with all due formality made proposals of marriage to Abigail, and she became his wife.

This imposition of blackmail was probably the prevailing reason which induced the Ziphites of Hebron to appeal once more to Saul to rid them of the presence of one whom they regarded as little better than a brigand, and Saul

PLATE No. 36
DAVID'S CAMP AT ENGEDI

Plate No. 37
DAVID SPARES THE LIFE OF SAUL

accordingly organized an expedition, and made a swift descent upon Jeshimon, thinking to fall unawares upon David in the place indicated. But David was far too wary to be taken in this way. He had watchmen on every hill-top who reported the movements of a body of troops too numerous to proceed unobserved; and when the expedition camped for the night, they did so under the very eyes of the men whom they thought to take by surprise. Worn out with the fatigue of their forced march, the men slept heavily. Even the sentinels slumbered at their posts, and failed to note the stealthy approach of two figures which detached themselves from the shadow of the hill and emerged into the misty moonlight of the open valley. Taking advantage of every patch of darkness thrown by bush or boulder, the two men crept nearer and nearer, lying motionless when some drowsy sentry stumbled past, until they reached the spot where the king lay apart, unarmed and at their mercy, his spear stuck into the ground and his water-bottle standing by his pillow.

Then said one to the other, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand: now, therefore, let me smite him with the spear even to the earth at once. . . . And David said unto Abishai, his nephew, The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed: but take thou the spear that is at his bolster and the cruse of water, and let us go. (1 *Sam.* xxvi. 8, 11.) (*Plate* 37.)

Returning undiscovered as they came, a ringing voice soon after broke the stillness of the night, calling to Abner and taunting him with having betrayed his trust. Wherefore hast thou not kept thy lord the king? And see now, said the accuser, where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster. And Saul knew David's voice and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And when he saw the trophies in David's hand and understood his magnanimity, a sudden generous impulse urged from his lips the confession, I have played the fool and erred exceedingly; return, my son, for I will do thee no harm. (1 *Sam.* xxvi. 15–17, 21.) But David knew only too well that such remorse was temporary merely, and that this humiliation of his pride would but envenom the reaction of Saul's hatred which would certainly ensue. When Saul, therefore, returned to his place, David felt that the king would, sooner or later, succeed in compassing his destruction if he remained within the border of Israel.

No alternative seemed to suggest itself save the doubtful one of offering his services to his old enemy, the king of Gath, who gladly seized this opportunity of strengthening himself at the expense of Saul, and granted David's stipulation that he and his mercenaries should be assigned, as a residence, the city of Ziklag on the extreme southern border, with a free hand to conduct proposed raids against Israel in his own way. But David's object in selecting this out-of-the-way frontier post was that he might protect, and not injure, his fellow-countrymen. He directed his forays, therefore, against the Amalekites and other desert tribes

of the Nejeb, falsely reporting to Achish that the spoil which he sent to him from time to time had been taken from the South of Judah, and . . . the South of the Kenites . . . and Achish believed David, saying, he hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him. (1 *Sam.* xxvii. 10, 12.)

This deception was carried on for more than a year, when events took place which rendered its continuance impossible. Once more the Philistines took the field in force, determined, as much in self-defence as in the spirit of aggression, to reassert their sovereignty over the tribes whose raids and forays were a perpetual menace to the security of Philistia. Mere reprisals were useless, as a single descent by the highlanders of Israel upon the rich maritime plain wrought ten times more havoc than could be achieved by any counter-raid among the barren hills of Benjamin or Judah.

Proceeding northward by the plain of Sharon the Philistine army entered the great plain of Jezreel by the Dothan Pass, of which they must already have held command, thereby preventing any reinforcements from the north from reaching the army of Saul, and obviously with the purpose of invading Mount Ephraim and the southern tribes by the central upland route along which Saul was at this moment advancing. Once assured of the enemy's intentions, Saul drew up his army at the extremity of Gilboa, a promontory which projects northwards for about six miles from the highlands of Mount Ephraim, and divides the southern part of the plain into two valleys, a position admirable in many respects, but which has the fatal disadvantage that, unless held in force by an army numerically equal or superior to its opponent, it provides no safe line of retirement in case of defeat.

XVII

THE BATTLE OF GILBOA AND THE TRAGIC DEATH OF SAUL

AS Saul stood on the extremity of Gilboa and watched the well-equipped battalions of the Philistines crossing the plain beneath him, in seemingly endless procession, and deploying at the foot of the hills of Shunem, doubts and fears assailed his soul such as he had never felt before in the presence of the enemy—fears when he remembered that sacrifice of public duty to private vengeance, and acts of high-handed tyranny, had alienated the loyalty of his subjects, who were even now deserting his standard—and dread of the wrath of Jehovah Whose warnings he had neglected, Whose priests he had slain. That very day, when he had enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. (1 *Sam.* xxviii. 6.)

Lawful means having thus failed of ascertaining what lay hidden behind the dark veil of the future, Saul in despair had recourse to methods which he had previously condemned. Disguised, and accompanied by two attendants, he crossed the plain, under cover of night, to Endor where abode a certain witch skilled in the arts of necromancy; and it is recorded that, by her means, the spirit of Samuel the Prophet was summoned from its resting-place, and that he pronounced against Saul his irrevocable doom. The Lord is departed from thee and is become thine enemy: for the Lord hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David, because thou obeyedst not the Voice of the Lord . . . and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the Lord also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hands of the Philistines. (1 *Sam.* xxviii. 16–19.)

Nor was Saul the only man for whom that day had dawned in perplexity and dread. Summoned to join the standard of the Philistine leader, David saw no way of evading the service which he had accepted. He had actually followed Achish thus far, with what misgiving can well be imagined, when fortunately for his good name as a patriot, he was saved from the odium inevitably incurred by one who fights in the ranks of his country's enemies, by the objection taken to his presence by the lords of the Philistines, lest, as they said, he should turn against them in the day of battle. When the Philistines therefore re-crossed the plain, and took up a new position for assault on the mound of Jezreel, David and his mercenaries were dismissed from the army, and returned to Ziklag, which they reached barely in time to rescue their families and property from a

marauding band of Amalekites who had taken advantage of their absence to burn and sack the city.

Had Saul displayed at Gilboa the soldierly qualities which marked his strategy at Elah, the ruin of his kingdom might even now have been averted. Prudence ought surely to have dictated the withdrawal of his dangerously advanced line of defence, and the occupation instead of the rugged and difficult country of Mount Ephraim, where the Philistines would be deprived of the use of the chariots wherein lay so large a proportion of their strength, and where, even in case of defeat, position after position could favourably have been occupied in the rear, and a possible victory snatched from the exhausted pursuers.

But with the recklessness of despair, knowing that his own fate was sealed, and blind to the consequences entailed upon his people by a decisive defeat, Saul chose to run this risk, hoping against hope that he might even yet achieve an immediate and brilliant victory. Staking everything on the hazard of a die, he made the gambler's throw, and lost.

To the Philistines, also, the risk of attacking Saul in his chosen position was almost equally great. No choice, however, was left to them, save that of executing a flank march in the face of the enemy, an alternative not to be thought of.

The right of the Israelites on the precipitous ground overlooking the pool of Harod was practically unassailable, but the centre, and especially the left of their line, offered vulnerable points, where gentle slopes lead from the level ground below Jezreel to the rocky summit of the plateau. Full advantage had doubtless been taken of the few days' delay to strengthen these points with breastworks and palisades; but here, nevertheless, on the left flank of the Israelites, the brunt of the conflict was most furiously maintained throughout the day. Charge after charge of the Philistine chariots rushed up that death-strewn slope in the effort to clear the way for their infantry, only to be met by the enfilading archery of Jonathan's bowmen and hurled back by the spearmen on the plateau. Right well and gallantly did Saul and his men uphold the honour of Israel on that fatal day. Truly, " The bow of Jonathan turned not back and the sword of Saul returned not empty," but heroism must yield in the end before the weight of sheer numbers. The line of defence was shattered at last, and the chariots and infantry streaming through the gap in close pursuit, prevented the broken and exhausted troops from rallying upon positions in the rear, which might have been occupied with advantage at an earlier hour.

Saul fell by his own hand rather than endure the humiliation of being taken alive and abused by his enemies; but life was still in him when the robbers of the dead slunk forth at nightfall upon their vile errand. One of these prowlers found the dying king, and if the tale he told be true, he only obeyed Saul's last command when he stood upon him and slew him; " for anguish had come upon him because his life was yet whole in him." (*Plate* 38.) Then, taking his

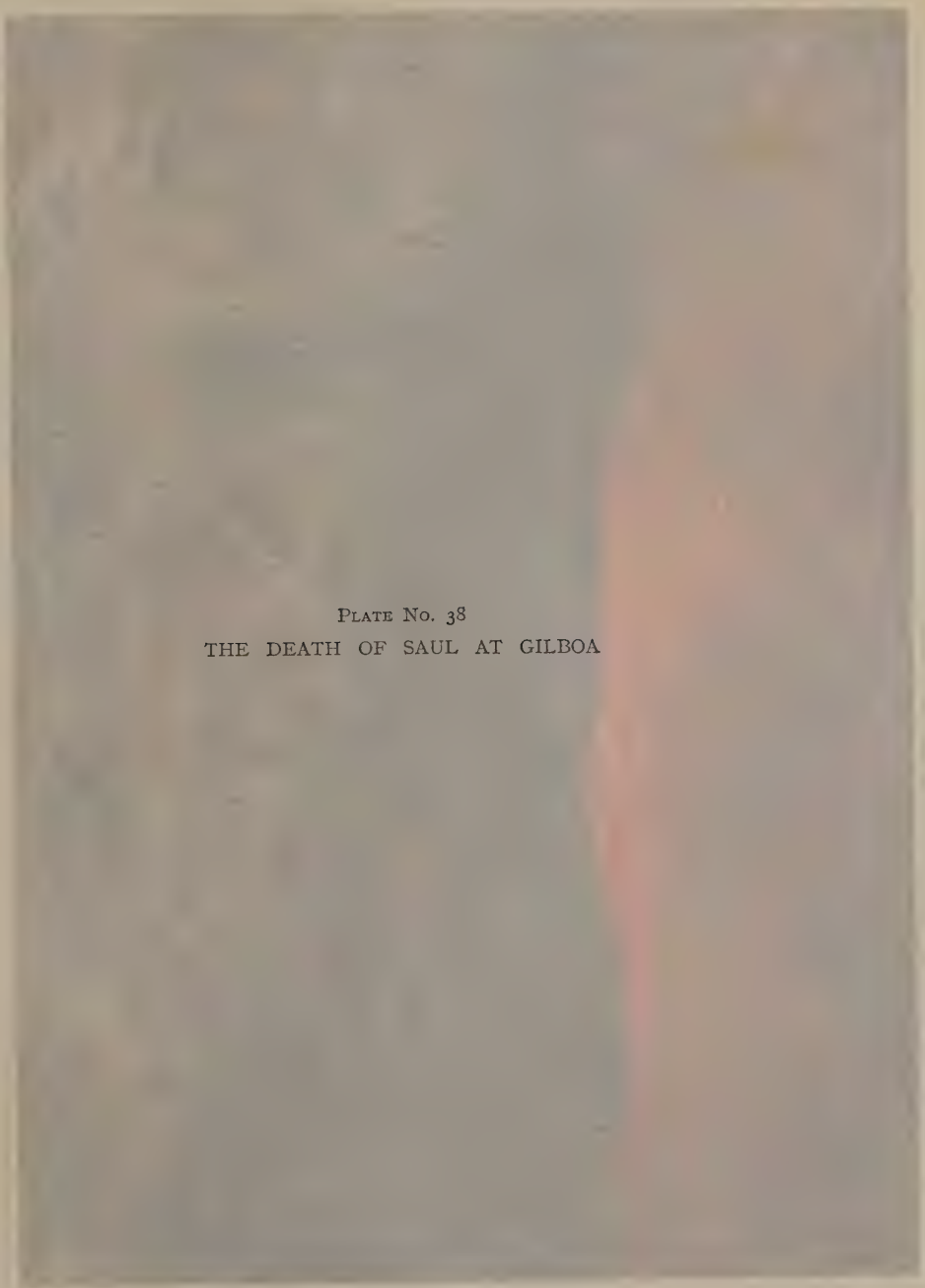

PLATE No. 38
THE DEATH OF SAUL AT GILBOA

information, as he fondly believed, to the best market, he hastened to David at Ziklag and displayed the royal diadem and bracelet which he had taken from the dead. Little did the wretch anticipate his reception, or the reward that was meted out to him. "Wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" And David called one of the young men and said, Go near and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died. (2 *Sam.* i. 14, 15.)

In that hour David was conscious only of overwhelming sorrow, and of the loss the nation had sustained. All sense of personal injury was forgotten. He remembered only the nobler aspects of Saul's character, and thought of him but as the valiant soldier and the bulwark of Israel. And in grief for Jonathan, his brother in love, his comrade in arms, he poured forth the sorrow of his heart in the noblest elegy that perhaps ever was composed, and which he caused to be taught to the people and chanted throughout the land in national lamentation.

And when they told David of the noble exploit of the men of Jabesh, who had taken the bodies of Saul and of his sons from the walls of Bethshan where they had been shamefully exposed by the Philistines, David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-Gilead and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the Lord, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. And now the Lord shew kindness and truth unto you; and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing. (2 *Sam.* ii. 5, 6.)

XVIII

DAVID BECOMES KING OF ALL ISRAEL

IMMEDIATELY after the national disaster at Gilboa, Abner, the captain of the host, took Ishbosheth, a son of Saul, and proclaimed him king over Israel at Mahanaim, a city of northern Gilead. And all Israel, with the exception of the tribe of Judah, adhered to the house of Saul. But when David came up from Ziklag with his followers and established himself in Hebron, the elders of Judah assembled themselves together and anointed him there as king, doubtless with the sanction of their over-lords the Philistines, who saw in this petty kingship no threat to their own dominion, but watched with complacency while the rival kingdoms of Israel and Judah exhausted themselves and each other with internal strife.

For seven years and more this civil war continued, the house of Saul gradually weakening as that of David increased in strength. For Ishbosheth (or Esh-baal), the degenerate son of Saul, was a feeble creature, utterly incapable of gripping the sceptre which had been thrust into his hand, and held there, by Abner's strength alone. Abner's patience finally yielded to the contempt which he felt for a man who had proved himself so unworthy of his nomination and support, and when Esh-baal ventured on a querulous expostulation regarding a concubine of Saul's with whom Abner had formed a connection, Abner's wrath flamed up in a threat that he would transfer his allegiance to the house of David, a threat which he lost no time in realizing. His overtures of support were accepted by David subject to the condition that Michal the daughter of Saul, the wife of whom he had been deprived, should be restored to him, in order to strengthen the claim which as son-in-law of Saul he might thus advance for his acceptance by the people.

In an evil hour for himself, Abner came to Hebron as the envoy of Israel, to make these final arrangements, either forgetting, or ignorant of the fact, that Joab and Abishai, David's nephews, had sworn a feud against him for the blood of Asahel their brother, whom he had slain in one of the earlier battles of the civil war. His mission accomplished, Abner was returning, when he was met and treacherously murdered by Joab in the gate of Hebron. Partly in indignation at this dastardly crime, partly also in fear of the political consequences, David loudly protested his innocence of all complicity in the deed. He composed an ode of lamentation for the dead; he fasted and wept, and with rent garments and girded with sack-cloth he followed the funeral bier; but he left the murderers unpunished. As David had frequent cause to say, " These men, the sons of

Plate No. 39

THE CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM FROM THE JEBUSITES

Zeruiah, be too hard for me." Wise counsellors were they, gallant and capable soldiers, and staunchly loyal to his throne, so that David could ill dispense with their services; but they embittered that service by their violence, and by their presumptuous defiance of the king's commands when, in their opinion, disobedience better served his interests, and their own.

But David's generous recognition of Abner's merits " pleased the people, as whatsoever the king did pleased them "; so that when the unfortunate Esh-baal was shortly afterwards assassinated in his house by two of his own followers, it was remembered that Samuel, the prophet of the Lord, had long ago made choice of David to be captain over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and King David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord : And they anointed David king over Israel. (2 *Sam.* v. 3.)

It was well for Israel at this time that the Philistines moved slowly when they went to war, and that their confederated states required time to agree in council before concerted action could be taken. At this crisis, the march of events outstripped their decision, and by the time they had realized the changed condition of their vassal, and marched an army against him, the opportune moment had gone by. Twice over the Philistines came up and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim, between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and twice they were hurled back by the way that they had come; on the second occasion suffering so disastrous a defeat that the yoke was finally shattered which had lain so long upon the neck of Judah, and the scene of subsequent warfare was transferred to Philistia itself.

His hands thus freed, the first task that David had to undertake was the consolidation of his kingdom by the union of the northern and southern tribes. A chief obstacle to this had already been removed by Saul's high-handed subjugation of the line of Gibeonite cities whose independence had been a thorn in the side of Israel since the days of Joshua. But the stronghold of Jebus remained, still unsubdued, and insolently defiant of attack. So confident, indeed, were the Jebusites in the strength of their fortress, that it was a saying among them that the lame and the blind were a sufficient garrison of defence. " Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion which is the City of David." The ambiguity of the text leaves the method of attack open to conjecture; but apparently the place was taken by direct assault, and Joab being the first to gain entrance, was awarded the promised distinction of captaincy over the hosts of Israel. (*Plate* 39.)

The reduction of this stronghold was of supreme importance, for its capture not only removed a standing menace to the safety of the new kingdom, but it provided at the same time the nucleus of an obviously suitable capital. Jerusalem combined the advantage of exceptional military strength with that of occupying a geographically central position in the country; and, what was of no less value, it was politically neutral, in the sense that it was associated with the name of no

particular tribe, and belonged neither to the northern nor to the southern section of the kingdom.

But further than this, David aimed at making his new capital the recognized centre of the religious as well as of the civil life of the nation, believing with fervour in the worship of Jehovah as essential to the well-being of Israel. To this end, he brought the Ark of the Covenant, with which the immediate and personal presence of the God of Israel had so long been associated, from Kirjath-Jearim, where for upwards of fifty years it had lain neglected and wellnigh forgotten. This was made an occasion of national rejoicing. Representatives of all Israel were present, and joined in the triumphal procession which accompanied the sacred Ark as it wended its way up the valley of Rephaim, borne aloft on the shoulders of the priests. Hill and vale echoed with the sound of psaltery and harp, the peal of trumpets and the clash of cymbals, while the voices of the trained choir of Levites chanted that hymn of praise, so familiar to this day, but sung then for the first time.

> O give thanks unto the Lord, call upon His name,
> Make known His deeds among the people.
> Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him,
> Talk ye of all His wondrous works.
> Glory ye in His holy name:
> Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.
>
> (*Ps.* cv. 1–3.)

Solemn dances also were performed in which the king himself took part, clothed in priestly vestments. And when the Ark was finally brought within the walls, and enclosed in the splendid Tabernacle which David had prepared for its reception, he offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God, and blessed the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts, giving largess of bread and meat and wine, so that this might be a day of private as well as of public rejoicing. (*Plate* 40.)

The term " City of David " is somewhat misleading. We are accustomed to associate the word " City " with a place of some magnitude; but in fact the town of Zion covered only some twenty-five acres of the ridge of Ophel, the eastern of the two hills upon which the city of Jerusalem was subsequently built. The additions which David made at this time to the fortifications, together with the erection within the walls, of his own house and quarters for the bodyguard, and the space required for the Tabernacle, left little room for further building. It may safely be assumed, therefore, that accommodation for the rapidly increasing population attracted to the capital must have been found in suburbs erected in the intervening valley and on the slope of the western hill.

PLATE No. 40

DAVID BRINGING THE ARK INTO JERUSALEM

XIX

DAVID'S SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

ONCE firmly established upon the throne of Israel, and strong in the support of a united people, David embarked upon a career of conquest. The first to engage his attention were naturally his familiar foes the Philistines, who speedily experienced, to their cost, the difference between the strength of the tribes of Israel and that of Israel as a united nation. After a campaign in which many deeds of individual prowess by David's "mighty men" are duly recorded, the power of the Philistines for offence seems finally to have been broken. Save for an outbreak a hundred and fifty years later, they only appear again on the page of history as "the Cherethites and Pelethites," that formidable regiment of guards or *Gibbôrîm* which formed the nucleus of the standing army of the kings of Judah.

But David aimed at much more than the mere security of his existing kingdom. The consciousness of military strength inspired him with the lust of conquest and ambition to add to his dominions. How otherwise can we account for his seemingly unprovoked assault upon Moab, whose kindness and protection he had recently been thankful to accept, and for what other reason could he have attacked the Syrians in the far north towards the Euphrates? The historians evidently assume that there was some justification; for in both of these cases, and in that also of the campaign against Edom. the success achieved is attributed by them to the blessing of the Lord.

All these people were subdued, treated with great rigour, and made tributary to Israel. Great wealth of spoil was gathered, much of which was dedicated by the king to the service of the Lord at Jerusalem, and utilized afterwards by his son for the enrichment of the Temple. In addition to this, the command of the trade routes through Damascus, and the acquisition from Edom of Ezion-Geber on the Red Sea, must have been sources of largely increased revenues to the king, and of commercial prosperity to the country.*

Meanwhile the young king of Ammon, believing himself strong enough to cope with the power of Israel, rashly precipitated war by grossly insulting the ambassadors whom King David had sent to his court with a message of friendly sympathy on the death of Nahash his father. David bided his time until he could bestow his undivided attention upon this new adversary, and then he launched

* David now brought his army up to date by adding to it a corps of chariots, the first hundred being those captured from Hadadezer of Syria.

against him the élite of his army under Joab and Abishai, who achieved a victory over the Ammonites and drove them within the walls of Rabbah the capital, inflicting at the same time a second and disastrous defeat upon the Syrians, who had allied themselves with Ammon in the hope of shaking off the yoke imposed upon them by Israel.

At this time David sought out Mephibosheth, a son of Jonathan, a man lame from his childhood, who had hitherto lived in retirement in Gilead. David brought him to Jerusalem and treated him as a member of his own household, restoring to him at the same time the inheritance of Saul which was placed under the management of Ziba, a faithful servant of the family.

This period of David's history marked the tide of his prosperity. The day of that reign which had dawned so auspiciously was now darkened by the shadow of crime; a crime which brought in its train a nemesis of shame, domestic tragedy, and rebellion.

Who can say by what specious argument David may have lulled his conscience to rest, and condoned the foul sin of which he had been guilty in betraying to death a brave and faithful servant, in order to obscure the results of his unbridled passion? But it was not until Nathan, under cover of a parable, had led David to denounce his own iniquity as worthy of death, that he realized its enormity in the eyes of God, and was driven to his knees in repentance and confession. (*Plate* 41.)

"Thou art the man!" were the stern and startling words of the prophet, when, after he had appeared at David's judgment seat, and related the despicable act of one who had robbed a poor neighbour of his only treasured possession, he had aroused the king's just indignation and wrath. Wherefore, he continued, hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house because thou hast despised Me; . . . and behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house. . . . And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. (2 *Sam.* xii. 9, 10, 13, 14.)

And the child was smitten with sickness, and hovered between life and death for seven days. During all this time David fasted and wept and besought the Lord that his guilt might not be visited upon the innocent. But on the seventh day the child died. Then David arose from the earth, and contrary to use and custom, he went into the house of the Lord and worshipped, and partook of food. And he said, While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept: for I said,

PLATE No. 41
NATHAN THE PROPHET DENOUNCES THE
SIN OF DAVID

against him the élite of his army

NATHAN THE PROPHET DENOUNCES THE

PLATE No. 42

THE SORROW OF KING DAVID

Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. (2 *Sam.* xii. 22, 23.) (*Plate* 42.)

Timely repentance for sin may earn its forgiveness, but it cannot avert its natural consequences; and these are to be read in the miserable record of crime and cruel revenge which darkens the annals of the house of David from this time onwards.

The evil example set by the father was speedily followed by his eldest son Amnon, whose innocent victim was driven to hide her shame in the house of her brother Absalom. Two years elapsed, during which any fears of vengeance for the foul wrong he had committed were lulled to rest, and Amnon, without suspicion, joined his brothers in accepting Absalom's invitation to a sheep-shearing feast in Mount Ephraim. But when the merriment was at its height Amnon fell, stabbed to death by the poniards of the servants of Absalom, who thereupon fled to Syria and took refuge with his grandfather the king of Geshur.

After three years, the soul of David yearned for Absalom his favourite son, and on Joab's intercession he consented to the return of the exile, although it was not till some time later that David yielded to the impulse of his affection and restored him to favour. But the young man proved utterly unworthy of his father's love and forbearance. To the sin of fratricide he now added that of the basest ingratitude and rebellion.

XX

THE REBELLION OF ABSALOM

WHETHER from indolence and love of pleasure, or from David's reluctance to depute his civil power to other hands, the administration of justice seems at this time to have been woefully mismanaged, causing widespread discontent both in the capital and in the provinces. Absalom was quick to note and to foment the consequent and growing dissatisfaction. He hung around the precincts of the court at the hour of audience, winning all hearts by his beauty of person, and by the graceful condescension of his manners and address. With affected interest, he inquired into the causes of litigants and petitioners as they came and went, expressing sympathy with their supposed wrongs and outspoken amazement at the miscarriage of justice. Oh that I were made judge in the land, he said, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice. (2 *Sam.* xv. 4.) (*Plate* 43.)

Having thus laid the seeds of disaffection in the city, Absalom, on pretext of a vow, went to Hebron, and there he raised the standard of revolt, summoning to his aid Ahithophel, the ablest of the king's counsellors, and sending messengers throughout Israel, being well assured of the adherence of many malcontents. And the conspiracy was strong, for the people increased continually with Absalom. (2 *Sam.* xv. 12.)

With such secrecy had the whole matter been conducted, that when news of the rebellion reached Jerusalem, the king was taken completely unawares. His guard of six hundred Philistine mercenaries were the only troops in garrison, a body quite insufficient in itself to defend the city; and there was neither time to send for others on whom he could rely from outlying districts, nor to make preparations for a siege. There was no alternative, therefore, but to abandon the capital and, while there was yet time, to effect a retreat eastward by the way of the wilderness, with the intention of crossing Jordan and retiring northward through Gilead, so as to join forces with Joab at Mahanaim.

Zadok and Abiathar the priests had proposed to accompany the retreat, bringing with them the Ark of the Lord, but it was decided that they would serve the royal cause better by remaining in Jerusalem, and conveying intelligence regarding the progress of events.

Attired in garb of mourning, a poor reflection of the anguish that filled his heart, the king now left the city with his household, and accompanied by his

Plate No. 43
ABSALOM STEALS THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE

PLATE No. 43

ABRAHAM SLAYS THE HEARTS OF THE
FLOCK.

PLATE No. 44

DAVID, FLEEING FROM JERUSALEM, IS
CURSED BY SHIMEI

PLATE No. 44
DAVID, FLEEING FROM JERUSALEM, IS
CURSED BY SHIMEI

faithful guard, crossed the Kedron valley and ascended the slopes of Olivet. Arrived at the " high-place " on the summit, he paused to look back, his longing eyes resting upon that " house of the Lord " which he feared he might never again be privileged to enter. Here he was met by his friend and trusted adviser, Hushai the Archite, whom also he persuaded to return, with instructions to feign allegiance to Absalom and, if possible, to counteract the counsels of Ahithophel.

And when King David came to Bahurim, behold there came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei: he came forth and cursed still as he came. And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him and cast dust. (2 *Sam.* xvi. 5, 13.) (*Plate* 44.)

Roused to fury, Abishai, with characteristic impetuosity, sought permission to cross over and slay the insolent rebel, but David forbade him, saying that if his own son sought his life, how much more might not this Benjamite do so! " Let him alone," he said, " and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him."

Meanwhile, the rebels occupied Jerusalem, where, acting on Ahithophel's advice, Absalom publicly entered the royal harem, an act which committed not himself only, but his followers also to open rebellion, and which by making reconciliation impossible, must needs confirm the adherence of dubious and wavering supporters.

From this policy no one ventured to dissent, but when Ahithophel further counselled that a flying column should be sent in immediate pursuit, to smite the king and his small band before they could be reinforced, Hushai declared that to do so would be to court disaster. He pointed out that a valiant soldier like the king, experienced in desert warfare, would certainly ambuscade the pursuers, and that even a rumour of failure or defeat would, at this stage, imperil the success of the whole enterprise. Far better, he said, to wait till every available man in Israel could be collected, and then to overwhelm the king by force of numbers.

This plausible reasoning prevailed over the wiser counsels of Ahithophel, who, perceiving its fallacy, but unable to convince his colleagues, arose and saddled his ass and gat him home to his city of Giloh, in Judah, and put his household in order and hanged himself and died. (2 *Sam.* xvii. 23.)

Hushai lost no time in communicating the decision of the council to the priests, who dispatched their sons, Jonathan and Ahimaaz, with a message to the king, urging him to cross Jordan with all speed and proceed to Mahanaim. After narrowly escaping capture, the young men reached the royal camp on the same evening, and by the morning light there lacked not one that was not gone over Jordan. The eastern tribes were loyal to the king's cause, and he not only

received ready contributions of provisions for his men from his own subjects, but unexpected support as well from the dethroned Prince of Ammon. Gathering strength as he proceeded, by the time that he arrived at his destination David was able to number his followers by thousands instead of by hundreds.

It had been his intention to lead the army in person, but when it was urged upon him that his life was too valuable to the nation to be thus risked, he reluctantly consented to remain in the city and to entrust the conduct of the campaign to Joab, as commander-in-chief, with Abishai and Ittai as his lieutenants.

Even at this crisis of his own fate, another thought was uppermost in the mind of David—the safety of his rebellious son. Tortured with anxiety on his account, this was the burden of his farewell charge to the generals, and in the hearing of the troops, he enjoined upon them that every care should be taken to spare and protect the life of Absalom.

Marching south in three divisions, Joab encountered the rebel host among the wooded hills of Gilead in the district occupied by Ephraimite settlers.

The narrative seems to infer that the royalists were greatly outnumbered by their adversaries, but the tactics of the veteran leader prevailed over the inexperience of his young cousin Amasa, whom Absalom had made captain of his host. The rebels were utterly routed and scattered, thousands of them falling in battle, and many more among the glens and corries of Gilead in the course of the flight and pursuit.

And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away. (2 *Sam.* xviii. 9.) (*Plate* 45.)

When this was reported to Joab, the stern old soldier did not hesitate for a moment between the claims of public and of private duty—between the national welfare and obedience to the king. Right well he knew that so long as Absalom remained alive, he would be a centre of sedition and of danger to the State, and therefore, braving the king's displeasure, he executed summary justice upon the rebel with his own hand. He took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. (2 *Sam.* xviii. 14.)

Swift runners brought the news to Mahanaim; but the victory which had been achieved was a matter of indifference to David compared with the life of his favourite son. And when he heard that he was killed he went up to the chamber over the gate and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom my son, my son! (2 *Sam.* xviii. 33.)

PLATE NO. 45
THE DEATH OF ABSALOM

But Joab had little toleration for this sentimental weakness—as he regarded it. He took his master roundly to task for his ingratitude to the loyal men who had fought and bled on his behalf, brusquely assuring him that the army bitterly resented such treatment, and that unless he could sink his private grief in his public duty, not a man of them would be left under his standard by the morning light. Stung into action by these bold words, though nourishing bitter anger in his heart against the speaker, David roused himself and held a review of the troops, and addressed them in terms of cordial appreciation of their services.

XXI

DAVID RETURNS TO JERUSALEM AND PREPARES TO BUILD A TEMPLE

THEN Israel awoke as from an evil dream, and there was but one thought and one desire among the people, namely, the restoration of the king who had delivered them from their enemies and made of them a nation. The journey back was a triumphal progress. A deputation from Judah was the first to welcome David as he re-crossed the river, and among the foremost, Shimei had the effrontery to present himself, clamorously repentant for having cursed the king in his tribulation. Abishai would fain have dealt with the man as he longed to do before, but David refused to sully this day of rejoicing with the shedding of blood, and sware to Shimei that his life should be spared. Next appeared Mephibosheth, pleading his lameness as the reason for his absence from his benefactor's side, and indignantly denying the treachery of which he had been accused by Ziba his servant. David seems to have been in doubt as to which of the men to believe, for he dismissed the question with the curt order that the property belonging to the one, and managed by the other, should be divided between them.

It was a more grateful task to reward the services of one on whom lay no suspicion of guile or self-seeking, and David embraced with affection Barzillai, the fine old Gileadite chieftain who had loyally supported the fortune of the king while this yet hung in the balance. Fain would David have retained in honour this faithful servant, but the old man pleaded his advanced age in excuse, and requested that any court favour the king might contemplate should be bestowed instead upon his son.

But the cloud of tribal jealousy obscured the sunshine of this day of reconciliation. When the men of Israel arrived at Gilgal, they angrily demanded why Judah had assumed the right of bringing back the king without waiting to act in concert with their brethren. Kinship was no sufficient reason, they said. "We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye." Anger begat anger, and the quarrel was so fierce, that one Sheba, a Benjamite, sought to rouse once more the recently allayed spirit of revolt. Wiser counsels prevailed, however, with the majority, and peace was restored. Sheba and his followers were pursued and overtaken at Abel-beth-Maachah, a town on the northern border, where the unwelcome refugee was slain, and his head thrown over the battlements by the inhabitants, as the price of their own and their city's safety.

PLATE No. 46
KING DAVID PURCHASING THE
THRESHING FLOOR

The punitive expedition had been entrusted to Amasa in the room of Joab, deposed by David from the chief command. But Joab was not the man to submit quietly to degradation. He joined the king's forces on the march with a contingent of his own men, and under guise of friendship, treacherously murdered Amasa, leaving his body on the highway; and resuming the command himself, carried the enterprise to a successful issue. Once again this fierce, intractable son of Zeruiah had proved "too hard" for the king, who apparently made no further effort to shake himself free from his "servant's" dominating influence.

After these events it is recorded that David was tempted to take a census of the potential military strength of the nation. Joab, more cognisant of the temper of the people than was the king himself, strongly deprecated this measure, believing that the somewhat uncertain allegiance of Israel to the house of David might be shaken by what they would doubtless, and justly, regard as a preliminary step to increased taxation or to conscription. But "the king's word prevailed against Joab and against the captains of the host."

And David's conscience smote him that in thus threatening the liberties of the people, he had sinned against the Lord; a fear which was confirmed when a pestilence which swept over the land was directly attributed to this cause by the prophet Gad. Then David besought the Lord for his people, that his sin might be visited upon himself and not upon the innocent, and the Lord repented Him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough; stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing-place of Araunah the Jebusite. (2 *Sam.* xxiv. 16.)

Moved by the spirit of gratitude for this great deliverance David forthwith purchased from its owner for the full price this threshing-floor where the plague was stayed, together with the oxen, and the instruments with which Araunah was engaged at the time in threshing wheat. And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. (2 *Sam.* xxiv. 25.)* (*Plate* 46.)

Gladly would he have proceeded at once with the erection of the glorious temple which it was in his heart to build in honour of the Lord his God; but that privilege was denied, for he had "shed blood abundantly"; and the utmost he might accomplish was to make ample provision for the stupendous work to be carried out by his successor, whose reign was promised to be one of rest and peace. David collected material of every kind in lavish abundance, gold, silver and bronze, precious stones and cedar-trees. He supervised the preparation of plans for the building, and designs for its appointments, to the minutest detail;

* The threshing-floor of Araunah was about 300 yards north of the City of David and on a higher level. It was the site of the great altar in the temple of Solomon and is now covered by the dome of the "Mosque of Omar."

and, what must have been a still more congenial task, he arranged and rehearsed the elaborate musical services of the sanctuary.

But the king was now an old man and it was evident that his health was failing fast. One thought was therefore uppermost in the minds of all—the question of the succession. There was as yet, of course, no precedent to follow, and court intrigues and plots were rife within the palace. One party, headed by Abiathar, the high priest, and Joab, favoured the pretensions of Adonijah, the eldest surviving son of David, and another, no less influential, supported the claims of Solomon, maintaining the king's right to nominate his successor.

To bring matters to an issue, and believing that fortune would favour the first open claimant, Adonijah and his followers proceeded to the royal gardens of En-rogel, at the junction of the valleys of Kedron and Hinnom, and there he offered sacrifices and caused himself to be proclaimed king. When the startling news of this daring act reached the king's ears, he roused himself from the lethargy of illness. He promptly summoned Nathan, Zadok, and Benaiah the captain of the host, directing them to take with them the royal guard and to conduct Solomon at once to the fountain of Gihon in the valley below the citadel, and there to anoint and proclaim him king. And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said God save King Solomon; and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them. (1 *Kings*, i. 39, 40.)

As Adonijah and his guests sat at the sacrificial feast by En-rogel, they paused, wine-cup in hand, as they heard the peal of a trumpet far up the valley, followed by a noise as of the shouting of a great multitude; and at the same moment Jonathan the son of Abiathar entered and breathlessly recounted what had occurred. This is the noise that ye have heard, he said, and Solomon sitteth on the throne of the kingdom! And all the guests that were with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way. And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose and went and caught hold on the horns of the altar. (1 *Kings*, i. 45, 46, 49, 50.) But on receiving assurance that his life would be spared if he proved himself worthy, he came and bowed himself to King Solomon and departed to his house.

On his deathbed, King David, after solemnly counselling his son to walk in the ways of the Lord and to keep His commandments and His statutes, enjoined upon him to show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, but—as if in illustration of the saying of them of old time, " Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy,"—David bequeathed also a legacy of vengeance, and an injunction that Solomon should bring down the head of Shimei to the grave in blood. And forgetful of all that he owed to the faithful counsel and loyalty of Joab, and remembering only his sins and contumacy, he gave a like command that Joab should not be suffered to die in peace.

So David slept with his fathers and was buried in the City of David, having reigned over Israel forty years.

Thus ended the most momentous reign in the history of Israel, and the life of its greatest king. Building upon the foundation laid by his predecessor, King David raised Israel from a condition of servitude to one of predominance among the neighbouring nations. But the glory that is for ever attached to the name of the " Psalmist of Israel " rests upon a far surer basis than that of any conqueror; for he it was who gave vitality to the spiritual life of his people—that spiritual life which, in spite of many backslidings and defections, was destined to survive nevertheless, and to be renewed under the pressure of adversity, so that it became the channel of God's message to mankind, and an evidence of the fulfilment of His promise that in Abraham and in his seed should all nations of the earth be blessed.

In closing the record of David's life, the reader is apt to marvel that with such lofty religious ideals, he should so often and so grievously have fallen short of them. Of him, indeed, it may be said that the standard of his attainment was the measure of his fall. But whereas his sins and omissions were those of an Eastern despot, and of the age in which he lived, his virtues, and the profound spiritual insight that distinguishes his writings, combine to make David an outstanding influence in the religious life of the world.

XXII

SOLOMON REIGNS AND COMPLETES THE TEMPLE

ON ascending the throne of his father, Solomon lost little time in confirming his sovereignty by the usual Eastern method of removing all suspected enemies. The rash action of Adonijah in requesting, through the queen-mother, that Abishag, his father's sick-bed attendant, should be given him to wife, was interpreted as a covert design upon the throne, and brought down swift retribution, not only upon himself but also upon Joab and Abiathar who were presumed to be accessories to the plot. Joab was slain at the horns of the altar to which he had fled for safety, and Abiathar was banished for life to his home at Anathoth. Soon after this, Shimei suffered the death penalty for an infringement of the condition imposed upon him, of remaining within the city boundaries.

Early in his reign, the young king acquired a reputation for wisdom by the shrewdness and insight he displayed in the administration of justice; an instance of which is recorded. The case was one in which two outcast women, who lived together, laid claim to the possession of a living child, while each denied the parentage of one which had died in the night. In default of evidence the king summoned his executioner and decreed that the living child should be divided between the rival claimants. One woman readily acquiesced in this decision, but the other cried out, O my lord, give her the living child and in no wise slay it! Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child; she is the mother thereof. (1 *Kings*, iii. 26, 27.) (*Plate* 47.)

In the fourth year of his reign Solomon embarked upon a vast scheme of building, which, together with the erection of the Temple for which his father had bequeathed to him the designs and material, included that also of his own royal palace with its adjuncts of the House of Pharaoh's daughter, the Pillared and Throne Halls, and the House of the Forest of Lebanon. For these last, additional material and additional labour were required. It is stated that a levy of thirty thousand men was raised in Israel to work in relays with the servants of Solomon's friend and ally, Hiram, king of Tyre, in the forests and quarries of Lebanon, whence the timber, and probably the stone also, was floated round to Joppa, and from there brought to Jerusalem. In addition to this levy, forced labour was commandeered from one hundred and fifty thousand of the Canaanites and Amorites who still remained in the land, an army which, vast though it seems, was probably none too numerous, when the difficulties of haulage and transport in a hilly and roadless country are considered.

Plate No. 47

THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON

PLATE No. IV

THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON

In spite of numerous attempts to make an intelligible reconstruction of Solomon's Temple, the vague description given by the historians renders such a task hopeless. It is tolerably certain, however, that its general form and conception was based upon that of the temples of Egypt. But the actual architecture was doubtless Phœnician, and if so, its gorgeous effect must have been due to the lavish use of ornament and costly material rather than to inherent grace and dignity of proportion.

The House of the Lord, erected on the summit of Mount Zion, or Moriah, as it is sometimes called, was of comparatively small dimensions. Roughly speaking, it measured one hundred and eight feet in length, forty feet in breadth, and from thirty-five to fifty feet in height. Its front, facing east, was completed by what is called a " porch "—probably pylons like those of Egyptian temples, towering for more than one hundred feet above the roof of the buildings behind.

The interior arrangements were similar to those of the Tabernacle, consisting of an outer hall, the " Holy Place," dimly lit from above by narrow windows and containing the Table of Shew-bread, a small golden altar, and ten lamps on golden stands, and, divided from this by folding doors and the richly embroidered " Vail of the Temple," was the sanctuary, the " Holy of Holies," a room of thirty feet in each dimension, totally unlighted, which contained only the Ark of the Lord, guarded by two colossal figures of Cherubim with outstretched wings, made of olive wood overlaid with gold.

And Solomon brought from Tyre a skilled artist whose name was Hiram. Among other things he cast the bronze pillars called Jachin and Boaz, thirty-five feet in height, which stood one on either side of the entrance door of the Temple. He made also the great basin, or " molten sea," which, mounted on twelve brazen bulls, stood by the south-west corner of the altar, and ten lavers on wheels, for sacrificial purposes. The rocky summit of the knoll which, with the addition of a few rough stones, had hitherto served the purpose of an altar, was now enclosed and covered with bronze and became the great " Altar of Burnt Offering," one of the distinctive features in the sumptuous appointments of the Temple. The whole fabric was enclosed by a portico, forming the upper court, or Court of the Priests; and this again was surrounded by the Great or Outer Court, which enclosed also the royal palace and its adjoining buildings on descending levels towards the City of David.

The dedication festival of prayer and thanksgiving was in keeping with the magnificence of the fabric thus consecrated. In the presence of the elders of Israel, the Ark of the Lord was brought up by the priests from the City of David, and deposited, together with the ancient sacred vessels of the Tabernacle, in its final resting-place. And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place . . . the Levites which were the singers being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps . . . lifted up their voice with the

trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever. (2 *Chron.* v. 11–13.) (*Plate* 48.)

And Solomon the king, standing before the altar, blessed the congregation of Israel. Then, lifting up his hands, he besought the Lord that, although the heavens themselves were not worthy to contain Him, He would deign nevertheless to behold this house wherein He had promised to place His Name, that whatsoever supplication might be uttered towards that holy place in times of sorrow, or captivity, or penitence for sin, might be heard in Heaven and answered according to the heartfelt prayer of the suppliant.

Yet in spite of the splendour of the Temple, its solemn dedication as the resting-place of the Ark of the Covenant and its sumptuous ritual, all designed with a view to the concentration of the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem, it failed of its immediate purpose; and it speaks well perhaps for the tenacity of the popular religious feeling of the people of Israel, that they did not readily transfer their loyalty from the ancient Sanctuaries and high-places of Gilgal, Gibeon, Beth-el, and elsewhere, to this brand-new edifice, devoid as yet of religious memories or associations.

Thirteen years later the king's palace was also completed, together with the adjacent royal buildings already mentioned, on a similar scale of magnificence; and the glowing description which is given of these, and of the lavish display of riches in the maintenance of an enormous household and harem, out of all proportion to the wealth or importance of a petty monarchy, is suggestive rather of vanity and ostentation on the part of its ruler, than of that wisdom which the historian is never tired of extolling.

It is true that Solomon embarked on a great commercial enterprise, but this seems merely to have been a private trading speculation on his part, and the profits, large as they were, did little or nothing to increase the wealth of the country or to relieve its people from the burden of the oppression under which they groaned. Possessed of an outlet to the Red Sea at Ezion-Geber, Solomon built there a fleet of " ships of Tharshish " * which, manned by his own crews, and officered by mariners lent by Hiram, traded along the coast of Africa and Arabia, reaching even as far as to India, if we may judge from one of the items of the merchandise with which the ships returned laden. Once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory, apes and peacocks. (1 *Kings*, x. 22.) (*Plate* 49.)

Besides the attraction provided by the splendour of his court, Solomon was a patron of the science, philosophy, music, and poetry of his time, in all of which he was himself proficient, so that his fame was known far and wide. And there

* Tharshish is believed to have been a port in Spain. " Ships of Tharshish " must therefore, in the present connection, mean vessels of such tonnage as were used by the Phœnicians for trading in the Mediterranean—in fact, what we should term deep-sea vessels as contrasted with coasting-craft.

Plate No. 48
THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

trumpets and cymbals [illegible]
For He is good [illegible]

And Sol[illegible]
Israel. [illegible]

[illegible] of the Ark of the Covenant and its sumptuous [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] of vanity and ostentation [illegible]
historian is never tired of extolling.

It is true that Solomon embarked on a great [illegible]
[illegible] people from the burden of the [illegible] under which they groaned.
[illegible]

PLATE No. 49
THE COMMERCE OF SOLOMON

his wisdom. (1 *Kings*, iv. 34.)

Plate No. 50

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth which had heard of his wisdom. (1 *Kings*, iv. 34.)

And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon . . . she came to prove him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. (1 *Kings*, x. 1, 2.) (*Plate* 50.)

In spite of the impulse given to the worship of Jehovah at least in the southern part of the kingdom by the glory of the Temple, and the numerous religious festivals celebrated within its precincts, no advance had yet been made toward the conception of pure monotheism. Jehovah was without doubt the God of Israel, adored and worshipped by His people, but the gods of the nations were none the less recognized also, as actual personal deities, claiming the allegiance of the strangers who dwelt in the land; for whose sake, and especially for that of his multitude of foreign wives, Solomon caused to be erected shrines and altars to Chemosh, Molech, Ashtaroth, and other Baalim, on Mount Olivet and round about Jerusalem; and these became a snare not only to Israel, but also to Solomon himself, for it is written, that when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; so that his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. (1 *Kings*, xi. 4.)

Not until it was too late did the conscience of the king awake to the sin which he had committed, and the stumbling block which he had laid for the feet of his people. Anxieties and misfortune embittered his latter days; and these he attributed to the anger of Jehovah, with a well-founded dread that worse was to follow, and that the penalty of disloyalty to his God and of the misrule and oppression of his people would be visited also upon his successors on the throne of David.

Disaster confronted him both upon the northern and southern borders. Syria and Edom had been conquered but precariously held by David, and they now took advantage of the relaxed military power of Israel to throw off the shackles of its dominion: and Solomon had to endure the humiliation of seeing the Northern Province wrested from his enervated grasp, and its fair capital of Damascus occupied by his inveterate enemy, Rezon, king of Syria.

To the smart of this disgrace was now added the fear of civil disturbance within the realm. Solomon had noted the capacity of a young Ephraimite called Jeroboam, and had set him over the levy of his fellow tribesmen engaged on the fortification works of Jerusalem. This position of trust gave the young man ample opportunity of understanding the grievances of the people, and probably of fomenting their discontent, as Absalom had done in the previous generation. His dreams of ambition were awakened or encouraged by the prophecy of Ahijah the seer, who, jealous for the honour of Jehovah and indignant at the king's

disloyalty, foretold the dismemberment of the kingdom. Rumours, however, of Jeroboam's treasonable practices reached the king's ears and he barely escaped arrest and death by fleeing into Egypt, where he remained under the protection of Pharaoh Shishak until the death of Solomon.

And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David his father, having reigned over Israel forty years. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

Thus ended a reign of wasted opportunities. Yet, although the promise of Solomon's youth remained unfulfilled, and although his extravagance and tyrannic rule alienated the loyalty of his people and shook to its foundations the fabric of the kingdom which his father had entrusted to his care, Solomon was nevertheless the means of conferring lasting benefits upon his nation and upon mankind. He fostered, as we have seen, and was himself a contributor to, the sacred and poetic literature of his time. The Temple which he erected to the service of the Almighty, regarded for long by the nation at large simply as a royal chapel, gradually and by slow degrees acquired additional sanctity in their eyes, until, when they were captives in a far country, this feeling ripened into that passionate love and longing which we see reflected in the psalms and prophetic writings of the Exile. To a homeless and scattered people the sanctuary of Zion was the emblem of their national unity, the visible presentment of the faith of their fathers, which, purified in the fires of adversity, became, in the fullness of time, the channel of God's blessing, and of the fulfilment of His Covenant with Abraham.

Plate No. 51

THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOMS UNDER REHOBOAM

XXIII

JEROBOAM AND REHOBOAM DIVIDE THE KINGDOM

THE men of Judah naturally acquiesced in the succession of Solomon's heir, but it was otherwise with the northern tribes of Israel. Jeroboam promptly returned from Egypt on the death of Solomon and had evidently brought his influence to bear, for when Rehoboam arrived at Shechem to receive the allegiance of his subjects, he was presented instead with a petition of grievances, redress of which was demanded as a condition of the acceptance of his sovereignty. The statesmen who had been his father's counsellors, and who knew full well the precarious position of the throne, unanimously urged acceptance of the people's just claims for freedom, but Rehoboam had the incredible folly to reject this advice in favour of that of the younger politicians who upheld the theory of an absolute and despotic monarchy. When the deputation, therefore, appeared the second time, Rehoboam roughly informed them that although his father had made their yoke heavy, he intended to add to the yoke, and that whereas his father had chastised them with whips, he himself would do so with scorpions. The response of the delegates was brief and to the point. They owed no hereditary allegiance, they said, to the house of David, and in the name of Israel, they then and there repudiated the claim of Rehoboam to their unconditional obedience, leaving it to the tribe of Judah to choose what king they pleased. So Israel departed to their tents, and sealed their revolt by stoning to death the unhappy official whom Rehoboam had, somewhat prematurely, sent to collect their tribute; a hint which the king was not slow to take, by retiring without further ceremony to Jerusalem. (*Plate* 51.)

Thus was the kingdom, which had been built up and held together for a brief century by the efforts of three strong men, wrecked in an hour by the purblind folly of an incapable king.

On his return to Jerusalem Rehoboam gathered together the whole fighting strength of Judah and Benjamin—for Benjamin had cast in its lot with the house of David—with the intention of recovering his inheritance by force, but being dissuaded from this act of suicide by Shemaiah the prophet, the king of Judah, as he must now be called, confined his energies to the defence and internal economy of his small kingdom; fortifying and garrisoning his frontier cities, and distributing his numerous sons throughout the land, presumably with

administrative powers. His hands were strengthened at the same time by the influx from the north of the priests and Levites, and of the more ardent worshippers of Jehovah, when they recognized that little or nothing was to be expected from Jeroboam as an upholder of the faith of their fathers.

Immediately upon his accession, Jeroboam had, in fact, recognized latent danger to his own sovereignty in the community of religion of the two nations, with its chief sanctuary at Jerusalem. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David : if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam, king of Judah. (1 *Kings*, xii. 26, 27.) Therefore, following the example of Aaron, he made two golden bulls, and set them up, one at Dan, and the other at Beth-el, the northern and southern sanctuaries of his kingdom, explaining to the people that these were emblems of the power and might of Jehovah. And he instituted festivals in their honour, of his own devising, and a priesthood of men who were not of the tribe of Levi, thus reverting to the laxity of former times when the Mosaic rule had been less strictly observed.

It is related that on one occasion when Jeroboam was offering incense before one of these images at Beth-el, " a man of God " made his way into the royal presence; and in the Name of the Lord cursed the altar which had been used for this idolatrous purpose, foretelling that a future king of Judah would upon it burn the bones of dead men. And the narrative further states that the hand which the king stretched forth in ordering the arrest of the daring accuser was withered so that he could not withdraw it, and that its power was only restored on his submission and by the intercession of the seer. The altar also was rent and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord. (1 *Kings*, xiii. 5.) (*Plate* 52.)

Little otherwise is known of the reign of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which lasted for twenty-two years. He appears to have been a capable ruler and warrior, but all secular details of his deeds and of his wars are ignored by the Scripture writers. He is only remembered as the typical instance of a king who " made Israel to sin." He tolerated, if he did not actively encourage, the cult of foreign deities, and he degraded the already low standard of the true faith by the introduction of idolatrous practices in the worship of Jehovah.

The promise of the opening years of Rehoboam's reign was unhappily not fulfilled in those which followed. For three years the influence of the priests and prophets of the Lord maintained its ascendancy, and the king continued to walk in the ways of David and Solomon, but he succumbed, as his father had done, to the temptation of the sensual worship of the gods of Ammon and Moab, an example which was only too readily followed by his people. To this defection

PLATE No. 52
A PROPHET OF GOD DENOUNCES THE
IDOLATRY OF JEROBOAM

is attributed the chastisement which now fell upon the land. Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against it with a mighty host and captured the cities of Judah; but timely repentance and national acknowledgment of sin turned aside the wrath of God and of His instrument of punishment; and Shishak returned to his own land, after having despoiled the king's house and the Temple of their richest treasures, and exacted tribute. Nothing further is recorded of the twelve later years of Rehoboam, save that "there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days."

XXIV

THE EARLY KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

THE reigns of Abijah and Nadab, successors to Rehoboam and Jeroboam, were brief and uneventful. By accepting the principle of hereditary monarchy, Judah was spared much of the anarchy and violence which so frequently punctuated the history of the northern kingdom, whose rulers had to prove their claim by their strength to maintain it, and where rebellion and death were the inevitable penalty of weakness or incapacity.

So fared it with Nadab the son of Jeroboam, who fell by the hand of Baasha, a usurper. This man took effectual means of establishing himself by extirpating the whole house of Jeroboam, though he followed their evil example and did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin. (1 *Kings*, xv. 34.)

But the reign of Asa, his contemporary, was an epoch in the religious life of Judah. He did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. He was a root-and-branch reformer. Recognizing the evil influence of his grandmother Maachah, he deposed her from her official position as queen-mother. He burnt with fire an abominable emblem which she had erected, together with all other idols throughout the land, cutting down their groves and destroying their altars, and he did much to centralize public worship, by bringing into the Temple the sacred vessels and consecrated gold and silver which hitherto had been used or stored at other sanctuaries.

Asa then turned his attention to the defence of his realm. He strengthened the fortifications of the border, a precaution which assisted him in repelling the attempted invasion of a vast army of Arab nomads, whom he decisively defeated at Mareshah in the southern Shephelah. This great deliverance was made the occasion of national thanksgiving, and of a solemn religious festival at Jerusalem, at which were gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon, for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance when they saw that the Lord his God was with him. And they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul. (2 *Chron.* xv. 9, 12.)

Alarmed at this desertion of his subjects, Baasha made a stronghold of the village of Ramah, within sight of Jerusalem, to the intent that he might let none go out or in to Asa, king of Judah; whereat Asa, distrusting his own power, sought alliance with Benhadad of Syria and induced that king to assist him by attacking Israel on its northern frontier. Baasha was unable to face both enemies.

He abandoned the military works at Ramah, and Asa, to prevent their renewal, promptly carried away all the material, and used it to strengthen his own forts of Mizpah and Geba. After a long reign of forty years, Asa, king of Judah, died, beloved and lamented by his people, and was buried in the City of David : and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead.

Asa was predeceased by Baasha of Israel. This man's iniquities had been boldly denounced by Jehu, a prophet who, claiming to speak in the Name of the Lord, foretold the destruction of his whole family and dynasty. A prophecy of this kind is apt, of course, to work its own fulfilment, and within two years, Zimri, a captain of the host, made himself the instrument of God's vengeance. He surprised and murdered Elah his master in the midst of a drunken carouse at Tirzah his capital, and followed this up by the wholesale slaughter of the house of Baasha. Zimri profited little, however, by his treason, for within a week he himself perished in the flames of the palace which had been the scene of his late crime, preferring suicide to death by the stronger hand of Omri, a former comrade-in-arms, who attacked him in Tirzah before he was prepared for resistance.

Judged by the uncompromising standard of the Scripture historians, Omri, king of Israel, surpassed the iniquity of all that went before him, for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, but rather added thereto by contracting an intimate alliance with the priest-king of Zidon, thus further deteriorating the religious life of his realm by the cult of the Phœnician Baal and the lascivious rites of Ashtaroth. But for this, Omri might have claimed a favourable verdict, for during his twelve years' reign he added to the material prosperity and political importance of his people. The Phœnician alliance, disastrous as it proved to the religious life both of Israel and Judah, was apparently a wise precaution, as it strengthened the allies to resist the steadily increasing pressure from the north, of Assyria and Damascus. This threatened danger also emphasized the necessity of providing Israel with a suitable capital. Shechem and Tirzah being practically indefensible, Omri purchased the hill of Shomron,* about six miles north of Shechem, an ideal site both from a military and a commercial point of view, and there he built his new and brilliant capital of Samaria, which for upwards of one hundred and sixty years rivalled and eclipsed the grey old city in the south, curtailed as this now was of so much of the wealth and political importance which had made Jerusalem a centre of attraction in the days of David and Solomon.

As the reign of Asa marked a crisis in the religious life of Judah, so that of Ahab, the son of Omri, proved no less critical in the history of Israel. It was the parting of the ways. The choice lay between that of righteousness as defined by the Word of God, and that of worldly power and sensual indulgence, typified by

* The Hebrew name for Samaria, the modern village of Sebastiyeh.

Baal and Ashtaroth; and Israel chose the broad road that led to its ultimate destruction.

Ahab had cemented the alliance with Phœnicia by marrying Jezebel, a Sidonian princess, an ambitious woman by no means content to accept the condition of toleration hitherto accorded to foreign deities in Israel. She set herself, on the contrary, to extirpate the worship of Jehovah; a task in which the apathy of her husband wellnigh permitted her to succeed. Terrified by persecution, the prophets of the Lord were silent, and the wave of infidelity was rushing on unchecked, when suddenly there appeared out of Gilead the chosen witness and messenger of God.

Plate No. 53
AHAB AND ELIJAH

XXV

THE TIMES OF ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

IN the whole range of Scripture narrative there is no more impressive personality than that of the hermit prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, whose strange and awe-inspiring figure emerged from time to time upon the scene, fearlessly denouncing the iniquities of the king and of his people, and proclaiming the wrath of God upon these " children of disobedience."

We see him first, in the presence of Ahab, foretelling, in the Name of the Lord, a famine of long and undefined duration. " As the Lord liveth before Whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word." The realization of the prophecy was speedily accomplished. The early and the latter rains were withheld for two years; till in the third year, every pool and river was dried up, and the land was reduced to starvation. Furious against the man whom he regarded as the author of this disaster, the king sought everywhere for him, but in vain, doubtless hoping, by torture or threat of death, to extort from his prisoner a revocation of the curse.

One day, to his amazement, while he was searching the land, together with Obadiah his chamberlain, for wells and springs that had resisted the drought, Ahab was confronted by Elijah himself who stood in the way, calmly awaiting his approach. And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. (1 *Kings*, xviii. 17, 18.) In that moment authority seems, as it were, to have changed hands, for instead of arresting the man whom he had so diligently sought for, Ahab, without demur, obeyed the command of Elijah to summon the prophets of Baal and of the groves of Ashtaroth, to meet him at Mount Carmel. (*Plate* 53.)

The Scripture narrative teems with dramatic incident, but surely there is none more startling and impressive than the scene which followed. Upon a rocky platform beneath the wooded crest of Carmel and overlooking the plain of Esdraelon, stand, on one side, the white-robed prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty in number, and on the other, beside a broken and disused altar, we see the solitary figure of the champion of Jehovah. In ringing tones he addresses the assembled multitude of the people. How long, he says, halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let

them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the Name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let Him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. (1 *Kings*, xviii. 21–24.)

The prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice. With solemn chant and invocation of their god they implored the manifestation of his power, their prayers increasing in agonized utterance and their gestures becoming more violent as hour after hour elapsed till noon was past. And as there was still neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded their frantic imprecations, mania seized them—the mania of the Eastern fanatic, when he falls to the ground foaming at the mouth, or lacerates the flesh which madness has rendered insensate to pain. All this while, the prophet of Jehovah stood apart, watching, and urging them, with bitter taunts, to renewed exertions; until, as the hour of evening sacrifice drew nigh, exhaustion overcame the frenzied worshippers, and their voices died away in inarticulate mutterings and silence. Then Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. And Elijah laid his sacrifice upon the wood, drenching it with water from the adjoining spring, and he prayed and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord He is the God; the Lord, He is the God. (1 *Kings*, xviii. 30, 36–39.) (*Plate* 54.)

At the command of Elijah, the prophets of Baal were taken down to the brook Kishon, none daring to lift hand or voice in their defence, and there, on a little knoll, in the sight of all the people, he executed vengeance upon the men whom he regarded as enemies of Israel, more dangerous by far than those who came up against it with sword and spear. Thus was the plague of Baal removed, for a time, from the land; and with it the curse of drought; for it came to pass, at the prayer of Elijah, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain.

At the command of God, Elijah had borne witness to the truth, and confirmed it with a mighty portent; yet he had no conviction that this had awakened more than a passing feeling of terror in the minds of his countrymen. In deep depression of spirit, therefore, once more Elijah sought the solitude of the wilderness, there to pour out the sorrow of his heart to God and to seek enlightenment.

PLATE No. 54
ELIJAH'S SACRIFICE AT MOUNT CARMEL

PLATE No. 55

ELIJAH IN THE DESERT OF HOREB

Onward he wandered, until his footsteps were guided unto Horeb, the Mount of God, where, in days of old, Moses the servant of the Lord had sought His help and guidance in similar perplexity of spirit.

And here the further revelation came to Elijah of the sign of God's presence. Not in the tempest, nor in the fire of heaven, nor in the earthquake, is He to be found. These are but signs and witnesses of His power. He Himself is present only in the still, small Voice speaking within the heart of man. If this fail to make itself heard amid the clamour of the world's idols, no marvel or miracle can avail to enforce a living belief—no, not if one rose from the dead. (*Plate* 55.)

Furthermore, the Voice which said, " What doest thou here, Elijah ? " bade him return to the world, and fulfil to the end the work whereto his life had been dedicated; for that there were even yet in Israel thousands of faithful believers needing encouragement and support in their trial, one of whom he must select and consecrate to carry on the light of truth, when he himself should be called upon to resign it.

Returning to Israel, Elijah passed by Jericho and Bethel, at both of which places there were schools of the prophets, but the man of God's choice was not there. He proceeded, therefore, up the Jordan valley and found Elisha, a farmer's son of Abel-meholah, who with the servants was engaged in ploughing his father's land. And Elijah cast his mantle upon him. Without hesitation Elisha obeyed the Divine call. He forsook all, and " arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him."

Meanwhile the danger from the growing power of Syria, which Omri had foreseen when he built and fortified Samaria, materialized in an invasion of Israel. Benhadad II came up against the city with an immense army strengthened by the forces of thirty-two tributary chiefs, and with loud boasts of what he would do if resistance was offered. Ahab accepted the first terms which were presented; but, encouraged by the word of a prophet, speaking in the Name of the Lord, he refused further humiliating demands made upon him, and boldly replied to Benhadad's threats, " Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." Never for a moment did Benhadad dream that Ahab's contemptible little army of seven thousand men would dare to take the initiative, or to attack him in the open field. He had made, therefore, no dispositions for defence, and his army was in the act of being arranged for a general assault of the city, when Ahab seized the opportune moment and made a swift and furious attack with his entire garrison. Taken wholly by surprise and receiving no orders from the drunken king, except the command to " take them alive " when he was told that the Israelites were coming out of the city, the Syrians offered no effective resistance. They broke and fled in panic, the king himself barely saving his life by seizing a horse and escaping with his cavalry.

Another attempted invasion in the following year proved even more disastrous. Relying on the assurance of a man of God that the Lord would deliver the multitude of the Syrians into his hand, Ahab had the courage to leave his stronghold and meet the opposing forces at Aphek, to the east of the Sea of Galilee. " And the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids, but the Syrians filled the country." When the battle was joined, however, the Syrians were again defeated with great slaughter. Many of them took refuge in Aphek, including the king, who sought to hide himself in an inner chamber. But the city was speedily stormed, and Benhadad had no alternative but to make an unconditional surrender. In the hope of converting a formidable enemy into a friendly ally, Ahab released Benhadad, accepting what was little more than a nominal ransom and indemnity. This toleration was not regarded with favour by the rigid upholders of the policy of national isolation, and it drew upon Ahab the stern rebuke of a prophet who met him on the way, as he was returning in triumph to Samaria.

Once more the ominous figure of Elijah appeared, and stood before Ahab in a vineyard which he had just acquired by the judicial murder of its owner, Naboth, a Jezreelite; and although timely repentance turned aside the immediate wrath of God, yet Ahab was assured that his crimes, and those of Jezebel his wife, should be visited upon his house, and that it was doomed to perish as had those of his sinful predecessors. (*c.* 876 B.C.)

Meanwhile, Jehoshaphat his contemporary was ruling wisely and well in Judah. He followed in the footsteps of Asa his father, earning the approval of God, the devotion of his subjects, and the respect of his neighbours. Not content to foster merely the outward observances of the worship of Jehovah, he saw to it that his people should be thoroughly instructed in the knowledge of the law of God; and he appointed, therefore, competent teachers, who visited the districts and townships, who used as their text-books such portions of the early Scriptures as had already been committed to writing.

The desultory and purposeless border warfare between Israel and Judah had long since died out; and as the material strength and prosperity of the southern kingdom had greatly increased under the beneficent rule of Jehoshaphat, Ahab, in view of the ever-threatening peril from the north, thought it well worth while to form a definite alliance with his neighbour, confirming the same by a marriage between his daughter Athaliah and Jehoram, prince of Judah.

The peace concluded with Syria lasted three years; but as Benhadad showed no sign of delivering up the important city of Ramoth Gilead, according to the terms of his ransom, Ahab determined to take it by force; and Jehoshaphat, who was paying a visit to Samaria at the time, readily agreed to take part in the enterprise on condition that the will of God should first be ascertained. The two kings therefore sat, as in patriarchal times, in a void place in the entrance of

the gate of Samaria, and the prophets to the number of four hundred men stood before them. And the king of Israel said unto them, Shall I go up against Ramoth Gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. (1 *Kings*, xxii. 6.)

One voice only was fearlessly raised in dissent, that of Micaiah, a prophet, who by bearing faithful witness against the evil doings of the king had thereby incurred his rancorous hatred. On the present occasion he did not hesitate to foretell the disastrous issue of the expedition. In words of solemn warning he recounted his prophetic vision. And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the Lord said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace. (1 *Kings*, xxii. 17.) He declared, moreover, that the Lord had doomed Ahab to destruction, and that to this end He had put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these His prophets.

The presence of Jehoshaphat had the effect of deafening the ears of Ahab to the voice of warning, pride forbidding him to yield to the misgiving which he doubtless felt, further than to take extra precautions for his own personal safety. When, therefore, it was decided that the campaign should be proceeded with, Ahab determined to conceal his identity under cover of a compliment to his guest. He requested Jehoshaphat to accept the honour of leading the allied armies to battle, attired in all the insignia of royalty, while he himself assumed the simple armour and equipage of a charioteer. On the day of conflict, the king of Judah accordingly attracted the chief attention of the enemy, but a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness . . . and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians and died at even. (1 *Kings*, xxii. 34, 35.) The death of Ahab meant the loss of the battle, and by nightfall the men of Israel and of Judah were retiring, every man to his own district and to his own city. So the king died and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria . . . and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

Thus perished Ahab, even as it had been foretold concerning him, having reigned over Israel for twenty-two years. More is related of him than of any other king of Israel; chiefly perhaps because his misdeeds had brought into prominence the impressive personality of Elijah, whom the prophetic writers of the Scriptures regarded as the typical representative of their order. But, judging by the evidence which they adduce, their sweeping denunciation of Ahab's character seems scarcely justified, and several points might be urged in favour of a modified verdict. It is evident, for instance, that after the sacrifice on Mount Carmel, a lasting impression was made upon the mind of the king, which, in spite of the virulent opposition of Jezebel, reacted in favour of the worship of Jehovah. In times of difficulty and perplexity encouragement was frequently given to him by " men of God " and directions for his guidance given and obeyed. And, as

in the similar case of King David, Ahab acknowledged and repented of a great sin, so that the immediate wrath of God was turned aside. (855–54 B.C.)

The reign of Ahaziah was brief and uneventful, and he again was succeeded by his brother Jehoram, one of the only two kings of Israel in whom any merit was found to compensate for the evil which they did in the sight of the Lord.

The children of Israel were a people at once credulous and hard of belief. They would accept, without questioning, tales of the miraculous, but they were slow of heart to believe the spiritual teaching of prophets who came to them in the Name of the Lord without the credentials of having wrought some "sign" or wonder in proof of their Divine commission. It is difficult, therefore, at this lapse of time to disentangle fact from allegory, in the numerous instances of wonder-working power which the historians love to record, of their saints and prophets of olden times; or to know to what extent the Almighty may have yielded to this desire for a "sign" because of the hardness of their hearts.

on the
related
jah and his faithful disciple receded
in the distance toward Jordan.
in earnest talk

PLATE No. 56
ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMMITE

XXVI

ELISHA BECOMES ISRAEL'S SPIRITUAL GUARDIAN

TRADITION states that there was a prevalent belief among the sons of the prophets that Elijah was not to die the common death of all men: and on the day when he bade them farewell at Jericho, it is related that they stood to gaze, as the figures of Elijah and his faithful disciple receded from them and disappeared in the distance toward Jordan. Crossing the river, the two friends, absorbed in earnest talk, were approaching the cliffs and ravines of Moab, where Moses lay in his unknown grave, when suddenly a light shone round about them, and Elisha beheld the vision of a dazzling chariot and horses of flame; and he felt the rush, as it were, of a mighty wind that parted them both asunder. Then all was still; and when he came to himself he was alone; an outer garment fallen to the ground being the sole evidence and relic of Elijah's recent presence. But he also found that he had received the spiritual inheritance which he had prayed might descend upon him. Making use of the garment with which Elijah had sacramentally consecrated him as his successor, Elisha smote the waters of Jordan, which parted at his command, so that he went over dry-shod. And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him. (2 *Kings*, ii. 15.)

Of the many stories recorded by the historians in evidence of the miraculous gifts of Elisha, there is none more appealing, or more sympathetically narrated, than that of the Shunammite woman. It relates that the prophet, passing to and fro in the land, was always sure of a ready welcome in the house of this friend, where thoughtful provision had been made for his comfort. Hearing of her private grief that she was childless, Elisha prayed to the Lord on her behalf, and in due time she became the happy mother of a little son. But one day the child went out to his father in the harvest-field and was smitten with sunstroke. He was taken home, and lay on his mother's knees till noon, and then he died.

Strong in her faith in God and in the power of His prophet to render help even now, the Shunammite wasted no time in useless lamentation, nor would she trust a messenger. She mounted her ass and made what speed she might across the plain to Carmel, and when she found Elisha she fell at his feet. (*Plate* 56.) It needed not her few anguished words to arouse his ready sympathy in her distress. Without delay he went with her. And when Elisha was come into the house, behold the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in, therefore,

and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. (2 *Kings*, iv. 32, 33.) And he stretched himself upon the child, imparting to the little body the warmth of his own : and the child opened his eyes.

The compilers of the book of Kings are so engrossed at this period with the subject of their prophets, that they pay little attention to contemporary events in which these men played no part, and it is most difficult, therefore, to trace the sequence and connection of those which actually occurred. No reference is made, for instance, to the battle of Karkar (854 B.C.), to which Jehoram, together with other minor kings, had sent a large contingent to assist Syria in the effort to stem the tide of Assyrian aggression. One result of this defeat of the coalition was the successful rising of Moab against the dominion of Israel. Jehoshaphat deemed it advisable to assist his ally in crushing this rebellion, and suggested that the attack should be made from the south in order to secure the adhesion of Edom. By doing this, however, the allies found themselves in a waterless country, and were only saved from dire catastrophe by the prayer of Elisha. For the Lord caused a great rain to fall among the hills of Edom, which filled the water-courses and the trenches which Elisha had ordered to be dug. Though the battle which followed ended in favour of the allies, the ruthless advantage which they took of their victory, by devastating the country of Moab, stopping the wells and felling the fruit trees, so roused the indignation of the inhabitants that they turned against the invaders and drove them from the land.

Soon after this, the desultory warfare which Syria had been waging against Israel concentrated into a serious invasion, and Benhadad came up with all his strength against Samaria and besieged it. Jehoram was thus unable to help, when Moab, Ammon, and Edom took advantage of the isolation of Judah to attack it in overwhelming force. In this extremity, Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast throughout Judah, and Judah gathered themselves together to ask help of the Lord, even out of all the cities of Judah. . . . And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court (2 *Chron.* xx. 3–5), and prayed unto the Lord that deliverance might be granted unto His people. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel, a Levite, in the midst of the congregation, and he prophesied and said, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Fear not nor be dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's; to-morrow go out against them, for the Lord will be with you. (2 *Chron.* xx. 15–17.) And the people accepted the prophecy as the Voice of God and worshipped the Lord with thanksgiving.

The next day the army set forth as to assured victory, singing hymns of praise to the Lord, and towards evening they found the enemy encamped in three divisions in the valley of Tekoa. Under cover of night, three companies of chosen archers and slingers stole silently forth, and ambuscading themselves among the boulders and bushes, poured flights of arrows and stones into the camp

and retaliated at close quarters

of the vast camp was empty of all save dead

deliverance, the men of Judah returned and

teries and harps and trumpets unto the

28, 30.)

beset by the hosts of Syria that none might

or come into the city. Famine and pestilence were in her streets. Food

four hours should not elapse before

stared them in the face

Why sit we here until we die? Let us go into the

they crept out of the

PLATE No. 57

THE FOUR LEPERS LOOTING THE CAMP

fight in the

(2 Chron. xx

Plate No. 57

THE FOUR LEPERS LOOTING THE CAMP
OF THE SYRIANS

opposite. Each of the three nations naturally imagined itself to be treacherously attacked by the two others, and retaliated at close quarters, with the result that in the morning the vast camp was empty of all save dead and wounded men.

Having gathered spoil in abundance and given thanks to the Lord for His signal deliverance, the men of Judah returned and came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the Lord . . . So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet : for his God gave him rest round about. (2 *Chron.* xx. 28, 30.)

Samaria meanwhile was so closely beset by the hosts of Syria that none might go out or come into the city. Famine and pestilence were in her streets. Food was no longer in the markets, the very offal of the slaughter-houses commanding its weight in silver. No ray of hope illumined the darkness of despair, when the voice of Elisha proclaimed aloud that twenty-four hours should not elapse before grain and flour would be sold for normal prices in the gate of the city ! And it came to pass even as he said.

There were four lepers who sat at the entering in of Samaria. Their begging-bowls were empty—death stared them in the face. And they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die ? Let us go into the camp of the Syrians : if they save us alive, we shall live ; and if they kill us, we shall but die. Before dawn, therefore, they crept out of the city ; and when they reached the camp of the Syrians, behold ! it lay before them empty and deserted. Save for the baggage animals tethered at their pickets, there was no sign of life, while garments, accoutrements, and vessels, scattered about in confusion bore witness to a hurried flight. For the Lord had caused the Syrians to hear in the night a sound as of a great army advancing to the relief of the beleaguered city, and without waiting to verify the truth of the panic-born rumour, they had fled in terror. Wondering and half terrified, the four lepers peered into the silent tents till dawn warned them of the risk of discovery ; then hurriedly burying the plunder they had collected they hastened back to the city with the glad news of its deliverance. Thus was the prophecy of Elisha fulfilled, and thus, at Samaria as at Tekoa, it might have been said, Ye shall not need to fight in this battle : set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord. (2 *Chron.* xx. 17.) (*Plate* 57.)

And Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, died (c. 850 B.C.), having reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years, and was succeeded by Jehoram his son. Forsaking the path of righteousness, in which his fathers had walked uprightly, and infected by the sinister influence of Athaliah his wife, as Ahab had been by that of her mother Jezebel, Jehoram did evil in the sight of the Lord. He inaugurated his reign by the murder of his six brothers—a deed in which we seem to read the instigation of Athaliah. He restored to honour the gods of the heathen, with their abominable rites and practices, thereby alienating those of his people who had laid to heart the lessons of the past, and creating antagonistic parties and consequent

weakness in the state—a weakness of which the enemies and dependencies of Judah were not slow to take advantage. Edom, which had always proved a more or less refractory subject, shook off the dominion of the house of David, elected a king and established its independence. This loss was followed by the successful revolt of Libnah; and finally, a marauding army of Southern Arabians and Philistines swept through the land, carrying away, amongst other captives, the king's wives and all his sons save one—Ahaziah, who ascended the throne when his father died of a grievous malady and was laid in a dishonoured grave.

The young king reigned only one year (*c.* 843 B.C.), but long enough to show that he was unlikely to depart from the ways of his father, or the counsels of his heathen mother. Leaving Athaliah to act as regent in his absence, Ahaziah led a contingent of his army to the assistance of his uncle, Jehoram of Israel, who was making a second effort to wrest from Syria the possession of Ramoth Gilead.

Year after year Elisha had watched over the spiritual welfare of Israel, hoping against hope that a reformation might yet be effected without the terrible alternative of revolution; yet in spite of the signal deliverance which had just been wrought in its behalf, the conduct of the whole house of Ahab remained such as it had been when the doom of Elijah was pronounced against it. Its iniquity was full; chastisement could no longer be warded off; it but remained to select the instrument. This lay ready to the hand of the prophet in the person of Jehu, a man whose capacity and fiery temperament made him popular with the army and thoroughly to be relied upon to carry out any enterprise he took in hand.

Choosing a time when Jehoram was at Jezreel, being healed of a wound received from the Syrians, and when Ahaziah had come down to visit him, Elisha sent one of the sons of the prophets to the camp at Ramoth, charging him to seek out Jehu and to anoint him king over Israel. One day, therefore, when the leaders of the army were gathered together at headquarters, there appeared among them a wild-looking ascetic, demanding a private audience of the captain. On learning that he himself was the man required, Jehu led him apart, and when they were alone, the seer poured oil upon his head and said unto him, " Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over Israel," and having thus acquitted himself of his mission, the man opened the door and fled.

On returning to his comrades, Jehu was assailed with jocular inquiries as to the mysterious message. But their mood was speedily changed when this was explained. They hailed the new king with enthusiasm, and after causing his accession to be proclaimed to the army, took effective means to prevent any rumour of the event from straying beyond the limits of the camp.

Accordingly, when a watchman on the tower of Jezreel reported the approach of an armed company, no suspicion of evil was awakened in the palace; and it was not until two messengers sent to them failed to return, and the furious approach of the leading chariot suggested that Jehu himself was the driver, that an

PLATE No. 58
THE DEATH OF JEZEBEL

undefined sense of danger urged Jehoram to go forth, accompanied by his nephew, to meet Jehu. And it came to pass when Jehoram saw Jehu that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many? And Jehoram turned his hands and fled, and said to Ahaziah, There is treachery, O Ahaziah! And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sank down in his chariot. (2 *Kings*, ix. 22–24.)

Ahaziah also was slain, and his body was brought to Jerusalem and interred in the sepulchre of his fathers. On making his state entry into Jezreel, Jehu was met by the bitter curses of Jezebel, who from an upper window tauntingly reminded him of the fate of Zimri; whereupon at his orders she was thrown down by her servants into the street and trodden under foot. That evening, men who had been sent to bury the dishonoured remains of the woman who in her time had played so important and sinister a part in the history of Israel, found that the word of the Lord had been literally fulfilled, which He spake concerning her by the mouth of Elijah, saying, " In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel." (*Plate* 58.)

The extirpation of the whole house of Ahab followed as a matter of course, and had Jehu then stayed his hand he would amply have fulfilled his commission, and it would have been easier for us to believe in the purity of that " zeal for the Lord " whereon he prided himself; but a lust for bloodshed and cruelty seems to have been awakened within him by these first executions. He caused the blood of his countrymen to flow like water. Everyone, however remotely connected with the late family, by kindred or friendship, was sought out and slain.

With the zeal of a fanatic Jehu further planned and executed the wholesale destruction of the worshippers of Baal throughout the land. Under pretext of a solemn assembly and sacrifice in honour of the Sidonian god, he enticed multitudes of devotees to gather together in the temple of Baal, so that its courts were full to overflowing: then, fastening the doors, he sent in a company of soldiers, with the merciless order, If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, he who letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him. . . . Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel. (2 *Kings*, x. 24, 28.)

Yet not a voice was raised in protest—Elisha himself was silent and seemingly acquiescent; and it was not till a century later that these words of God are recorded by Hosea the prophet, Yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu (*Hosea*, i. 4). Not until a late period in Israelitish history did it dawn upon even the most ardent of His followers, that their God was essentially a God of love and mercy, and that without these answering qualities in His worshippers, all outward observances of the Law are incomplete and valueless.

XXVII

DECLINE OF THE KINGDOMS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

THE death of Ahaziah and the senseless slaughter on the following day of his forty brethren at Samaria, gave Athaliah an opportunity, of which she was swift to take advantage, of usurping the throne of Judah. This step involved the murder of her grandchildren, but that was a small matter to a daughter of Jezebel. The children were slain—all save one—and Athaliah reigned in the stead of her son, and held the throne for six years; and thus it happened that while religious reform of a certain kind was being effected in Israel, the struggle was transferred to Jerusalem, hitherto the unthreatened stronghold of the worship of Jehovah.

It seems strange that the dominion of a heathen queen should have been tolerated there, but the cause is not far to seek. While the strength of the orthodox faith lay in the provincial cities and districts—" the people of the land," as they are called by the chronicler—Jerusalem itself ever proved susceptible to foreign influence; and so long as the worship of the sanctuary was not interfered with, the princes and the influential classes welcomed the infusion of foreign life and culture, which brought with it additional luxury and pleasure, and increased prosperity to the trade and commerce of the city. There were at the same time many who loathed the present régime, and who only submitted to it perforce, in default of a rightful claimant to the throne, and to their united allegiance.

As has been stated, one child escaped the massacre with which Athaliah inaugurated her reign. In the general confusion, Joash, a year-old infant, was rescued by his aunt, the wife of Jehoiada the high-priest, and hidden in a chamber of the Temple, where he remained for six years.

Jehoiada felt that the time was now ripe for action. He revealed the secret of the young prince's existence to the headmen of the provincial districts and to the captains of the guard, who promised him their loyal support, and it was decided that on the Sabbath, when the Temple would be thronged with the people of the land, Jehoiada should produce the child and crown him in the presence of the congregation. And, the further to ensure safety, the hour chosen should be that when the guards were changed, and when two companies would be in the Temple and one only on duty at the palace.

The secret was well kept. Not a rumour of anything unusual had reached the queen's ears till, on a Sabbath, she heard the noise of shouting and the blast of a trumpet in the direction of the Temple. Impatient to learn the meaning of this

[illegible] Athaliah proceeded [illegible] threshold. The [illegible] towards the Temple porch. [illegible] beheld a little boy standing at the [illegible] beside the imposing figure of the aged high [illegible] again the trumpets rang out, and the people [illegible] rescue. She was arrested by the centurions of [illegible] Temple precincts and slain at the [illegible] one of religious as well as of [illegible] was solemnly renewed, [illegible] and [illegible]

[illegible] priest. He repaired the [illegible] es upon a proper foundation [illegible]

[illegible] the pleasure-loving princes of the court [illegible] of the austere rule of life which had been [illegible]

[illegible] and described on the black obelisk of Shalmaneser, found at [illegible]

PLATE No. 59

THE CORONATION OF JOASH, AND DEATH OF ATHALIAH

strange disturbance, Athaliah proceeded in person to the Upper Court; but her foot paused upon the threshold. The place was filled with an excited throng, all eyes turned towards the Temple porch. There, crowned and arrayed in royal robes, she beheld a little boy standing at the foot of one of the great bronze pillars, beside the imposing figure of the aged high-priest; and as she entered, once again the trumpets rang out, and the people gave a great shout, " God save the King!" (*Plate* 59.) Her shriek of " Treason!" summoned no one to her rescue. She was arrested by the centurions of the guard, hurried forth beyond the Temple precincts and slain at the horse-gate. Then, as if to mark that this day was one of religious as well as of dynastic restoration, the oath of loyalty to Jehovah was solemnly renewed, and all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. The different sentiment prevailing between the provincial and the urban population is clearly defined on this occasion; for it is written that after Athaliah had been slain, " the people of the land *rejoiced*, and the city was *quiet*." (2 *Chron.* xxiii. 21.)

And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest. He repaired the dilapidations of the Temple and placed its finances upon a proper foundation, making a national collection for its maintenance and services, according as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded.

We have seen that Jehu, having destroyed Baalism out of Israel, restored the worship of Jehovah. But he did so after the unspiritual and idolatrous manner of Jeroboam, which was as abhorrent to God as paganism itself. It is not therefore surprising that the next detail in the historian's narrative is a statement that " in those days the Lord began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel, from Jordan eastwards," from Bashan to the Arnon. In those days also, Jehu having alienated the friendship both of Phœnicia and of Judah, thought it well to stand in the good graces of Assyria, and accordingly sent an embassy with a valuable gift to Shalmaneser (842 B.C.), which that proud monarch evidently accepted as a kind of voluntary tribute,* for it is nowhere intimated that the hoped-for assistance against Syria was ever granted. And Jehu died after a reign of twenty-eight years, and was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz.

When Jehoiada, the patriot-priest, died and was buried with the kings of Judah, it was seen that most, if not all, of the merit ascribed to Joash in the earlier part of his reign was due to the influence of his great minister: for no sooner was he laid in his grave, than the pleasure-loving princes of the court came to the king, pleading for relaxation of the austere rule of life which had been enforced under Jehoiada. Easily influenced for evil as for good, the facile king yielded to

* As such it is represented and described on the black obelisk of Shalmaneser, found at Nimroud and now in the British Museum.

a suggestion which was doubtless identical with his own inclination, and before long Jerusalem showed signs of relapsing into the state of spiritual apathy and degradation from which it had so recently been rescued.

Not without warning, however, did the change take place. For the Lord sent prophets to them to bring them again unto the Lord; and they testified against them, but they would not give ear. And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which said unto them, Because ye have forsaken the Lord, He hath also forsaken you. And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the Lord. Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. (2 *Chron.* xxiv. 19–22.) (*Plate* 60.)

Punishment and disgrace followed swiftly upon this act of infamy. Within the year, Joash was murdered on his sick-bed by two of his servants, and although his body was buried in Jerusalem, popular indignation forbade that it should be laid in the sepulchre of the kings of Judah.

The fortunes of Israel waxed and waned at this time inversely with those of Syria. Assyria being the dominant power in the north, its pressure upon Syria gave breathing time to Israel; but if warfare elsewhere claimed attention, Syria had leisure to renew its grip upon its southern neighbour, as in the reign of Jehoahaz when Israel was reduced to an abject state of subjection; but when Rammân-nirari III crossed the Euphrates and besieged Damascus, Hazael was obliged to withdraw his garrisons from Israel, and Jehoash was enabled to recover many of the cities east of Jordan which had been lost by Jehoahaz his father.

The accession of Amaziah to the throne of Judah (*c.* 796 B.C.) was marked by the noteworthy circumstance that although the murderers of his father were slain, their guilt was not visited, as it hitherto would have been, upon their families. This is the first recorded result of a gradual emancipation from the ancient unwritten law which regarded the family as a unit, of which each individual member was responsible for the deeds of the others; a conception which seems to be taken for granted in the Book of the Covenant, but which is definitely abrogated in the Deuteronomic Law—as yet uncodified though already acted upon. The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children for the fathers : every man shall be put to death for his own sin. (*Deut.* xxiv. 16.)

The fair promise of the opening years of Amaziah's reign were not fulfilled as time went on. The success which attended a military enterprise against Edom was also attended with extraordinary disloyalty against the God Who had given him the victory. Amaziah brought back the idols of Edom and bowed himself down before them and burned incense to them. Well might the prophet who was sent to denounce this iniquity say to him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people which could not deliver their own people out of thine

Plate No. 60
THE MURDER OF ZECHARIAH

Plate No. 61

UZZIAH ERECTS ENGINES OF WAR ON
THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM

hand? (2 *Chron.* xxv. 15.) But he gave no heed to the warning, nor desisted from his sin, therefore the Lord suffered Amaziah to draw down upon himself the punishment which He had decreed. Elated by his recent success against Edom, Amaziah rashly provoked a quarrel with Israel, with the result that he suffered total defeat and capture at Bethshemesh. Jehoash brought his captive to Jerusalem, which offered but a feeble resistance. He pillaged the Temple and the palace of their treasures, and having thrown down some three hundred yards of the north wall, and thus practically demonstrated the superior power of Israel, he returned to Samaria, taking with him hostages for the peaceable behaviour of his vassal.

Probably in consequence of the disaster and humiliation which Amaziah had brought upon the city, they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish and slew him there. (2 *Chron.* xxv. 27.)

Uzziah (*c.* 785 B.C.), his son and successor, wisely accepted the condition of vassalage to Israel to which he fell heir, but which it was no part of the policy of Jehoash to render oppressive, and the young king was therefore free to develop to the utmost the resources of his little state. He turned his attention first to the defence of his capital. Jerusalem was practically impregnable on three sides, steep ravines rendering its walls immune from the assaults of battering-rams: but the vulnerable part of the fortifications was the north wall, where the ground was practically level, and which had never yet resisted a vigorous assault. Here Uzziah made the engineering science of the day supply the deficiencies of Nature, building great flanking towers at frequent intervals upon the new wall, and gate towers. Upon these he erected newly-invented engines of war, capable of hurling huge stones to a considerable distance, and showers of smaller missiles, shrapnel-wise, against attacking forces. These measures of defence subsequently proved effective, even against the military engineers of Assyria. (*Plate* 61.)

The better to protect his trade routes to the south against marauding desert tribes, Uzziah built numerous garrison towers for the troops who policed the caravan roads and the southern district, which greatly increased in value during this prosperous reign.

The greater part of the Negeb was barren and unproductive for want of water; but year by year Uzziah brought more of this region under cultivation and increased the extent of pasture for the flocks and herds, in which lay much of the wealth of Judah, by digging wells and hewing out cisterns in the desert.

Judah was a wine-producing and wine-exporting country. The utmost attention was therefore paid to vine culture, and every available hill-side, especially in the Hebron and Eshcol districts, was therefore terraced and utilized for this purpose. At no time since the Division of the Kingdoms had Judah enjoyed such peace and prosperity as during the fifty years of Uzziah's wise and righteous

government; and although the latter years of his life were darkened by the affliction of leprosy, which obliged the king to live in strict seclusion, his wise policy was faithfully carried out by his son Jotham, who acted as his Regent during the remainder of his father's lifetime; and who, following the same principles and practice when he himself came to the throne, " became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God."

Jehoash of Israel (*c.* 781 B.C.) was succeeded by his son Jeroboam II, a man who proved himself as capable and energetic a ruler as his father. He took advantage of the decaying power of Syria to confirm his hold upon the provinces east of Jordan; and, partly by his own ability, partly also by the apathy of the immediate successors of Shalmaneser II, succeeded in raising Israel to a high pitch of material prosperity. But the worship of Jehovah still remained contaminated with idolatry and with the licentious rites of Canaanitish Baalim, so that it was in name more than in reality that the religion of Israel differed from that of surrounding nations.

Now, and for the first time, we are told of the effect of this upon the social and moral life of the people. Amos, a herdsman of Tekoa, and Hosea, a prophet of Israel, were inspired in those days to denounce the sensuality and corrupt life of the people, their greed, dishonesty, and oppression of the poor; so that all their solemn assemblies, their feasts and sacrifices, had become an abomination to the Lord, Who would surely visit their offences with the sword of the enemy, and with leading them into captivity beyond Damascus. It is evident, however, that solemn as were the warnings which they uttered, the vision of these prophets was restricted, and that they perceived neither the extent nor the imminence of the ruin they foretold.

XXVIII

THE ASSYRIANS LEAD ISRAEL INTO CAPTIVITY

TIGLATH PILESER II now occupied the throne of Assyria, and it speedily became apparent that the fate of the neighbouring monarchies and states was included in this great soldier's schemes of Empire. A brief respite was afforded to Syria and Palestine while the conqueror was busied with the subjugation of Babylon, but when he found time to send a preliminary expedition against the land, Menahem, who ruled Israel after conspiracies had in seven months removed the two immediate successors of Jeroboam, purchased temporary safety at the price, it is stated, of ninety-six thousand pounds of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. . . . So the king of Assyria turned back and stayed not there in the land. (2 *Kings*, xv. 19, 20.)

In those troubled times, little respect was paid to the law of hereditary succession. A king held rule over Israel for just so long a time as he could maintain his position with the strong hand. Pekahiah, the son of Menahem, was able to do this for barely two years, when Pekah . . . a captain of his, conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house: . . . and he killed him and reigned in his room. (2 *Kings*, xv. 25.)

Pekah was the representative of a party in Israel who bitterly resented the tame submission of Menahem to the burden of Assyria, and who cherished a belief that a timely coalition of the northern states of Palestine would afford an effectual bar to the advance of the conqueror. In the face of common danger, therefore, Syria and Israel, who had been in a state of continuous warfare with each other for upwards of a hundred years, found themselves at last, and for a brief time, united. Jotham, king of Judah, alone, farther sighted than his neighbours, refused to join this alliance when summoned to do so, but as his death took place immediately afterwards (*c.* 735 B.C.), it was left to Ahaz his son to face the immediate consequences of his father's decision.

These consequences were nothing less than the intended destruction by Syria and Israel of the whole house of David, and the substitution of a puppet king of their own, subservient to the commands of his masters. These plans, however, were brought to nought by the unexpected and successful resistance which Ahaz, acting under the influence of the prophet Isaiah, opposed to the assault of his enemies. The recently completed fortification of Jerusalem proved more than sufficient for the occasion, and the allies had no time to spare for a prolonged siege. A hurried raid, therefore, through the country, and the capture

of the seaport of Elath on the Red Sea, and of a few towns in Philistia, were the sole results of the campaign, when the allies were recalled to the north to meet the advance of Tiglath Pileser, long dreaded and anticipated, and now an actuality.

When Ahaz had been encouraged to play the man and to offer a bold front to his enemies, Isaiah was unable to dissuade him from trying to make his safety still surer by placing himself under the protection of Tiglath, and from sending him a present of the gold and silver belonging to the Temple, with the timid message, " I am thy servant and thy son : come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria and out of the hand of the king of Israel which rise up against me." He turned a deaf ear to the wise counsel which showed him the folly of this submission : that it was in the first place unnecessary, seeing that for his own purposes the conqueror would destroy the enemies of Judah; and, secondly, that by his present course of action Ahaz was placing himself not so much under the protection as under the heel of Assyria, who would assuredly regard this gift as the voluntary offering of a tributary power.

The Syro-Israelitish alliance fell to pieces as soon as Tiglath Pileser entered the land. He gave the confederates no time to combine their forces, but attacked them separately. He defeated Pekah, adding Gilead and Galilee to his own dominions, and, in accordance with Assyrian policy, leading the inhabitants into captivity. He followed up this success in the following year with the capture of Damascus, slaying the king and deporting the population. Nor did Pekah long survive his humiliation. He had doubtless alienated his former supporters by the disastrous results of his short-sighted policy, and he fell a victim to a conspiracy, whose leader, Hoshea by name, was permitted by Tiglath to assume the nominal sovereignty of the remnant of Israel.

The death of Tiglath Pileser, and the growing power of Shabaka, king of Egypt, suggested to Hoshea in an evil hour the rash idea of freeing himself from the yoke of Nineveh by forming an alliance with Egypt. This intrigue with Shabaka must have advanced as far as a clear and mutual understanding, otherwise Hoshea would not have dared to withhold the annual tribute from his suzerain; but its premature discovery brought upon him the swift retribution of Shalmaneser IV, who deposed and imprisoned him. The army of Assyria swept through the land, despoiling it of everything of value that could be carried or driven away, leading the people into captivity and reducing the whole country to the same condition of poverty and humiliation which was already the fate of the northern provinces.

Of the once powerful nation of Israel, nothing now remained but the city of Samaria alone, but she, kingless as she was, maintained a stout-hearted defence for no less than three years; buoyed up, doubtless, by the hope of relief from Egypt—relief which never came. For Egypt, proverbially treacherous, saw little advantage to herself in succouring an ally whose resources were already exhausted,

PLATE NO. 62

THE FALL OF SAMARIA

and who could no longer prove serviceable. Samaria, therefore, the last forlorn hope of Israel, was abandoned to her fate, and, driven to the last extremity, was forced to open her gates to Sargon, the successor of Shalmaneser who had died during the progress of the siege (722 B.C.). (*Plate* 62.)

Thus perished Israel from among the nations. Scattered and absorbed amidst the people whither she was led captive, her name appears no more upon the page of history. She had forfeited at once her birthright and her blessing by national defection, and incurred the doom pronounced of old by Moses the prophet: I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that ye shall utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen whither the Lord shall lead you. (*Deut.* iv. 26, 27.)

XXIX

THE TIMES OF ISAIAH AND HEZEKIAH

IT is easy for us at this distance of time to ascribe the fate of Israel to its proper cause, seeing this with the eyes of the later prophet who wrote "The Book of the Kings." But in spite of the preaching and warnings of Hosea and Isaiah, this was not so obvious to others living in the midst of these events. They were as blind, as if they had been a modern nation, to the lesson which was in the act of being written not for them only, but for all time.

So it was with Ahaz, king of Judah. He did everything, save the one thing needful, to ensure the safety of his realm: he did his utmost to propitiate the wrath of the Assyrian, but he emulated and even surpassed the deeds of iniquity which had drawn down upon Israel the wrath of Jehovah. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen . . . and he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree. (2 *Kings*, xvi. 3, 4.)

From the writings of Isaiah we gather a sufficiently clear conception of the public life of Jerusalem under such influences as these. Passing through the streets and bazaars of the city the prophet is keenly observant of its busy traffic, of the deportment of the wantonly attired "daughters of Zion"; of men, aye, even priests and prophets, reeling forth from scenes of debauchery and vice, objects of scorn and derision to the lowest of the people: and on every side he sees evidence of the perversion of justice, of wealth increased by callous oppression of the poor and helpless, whose plea, unbacked by bribes, receives but scant attention. (*Plate* 63.)

A dense cloud of smoke from the Temple courts announces that a great sacrifice is being offered to Jehovah, and the prophet, remembering what he has just seen, and the mockery of such mechanical worship, is moved to cry aloud in the name of the Lord, To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. . . . Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment;

PLATE No. 63
ISAIAH WITNESSES THE VICE AND FOLLY
OF JERUSALEM

relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow. (*Isaiah*, i. 11, 13, 16, 17.)

As Isaiah had warned him, the " present " with which Ahaz sought to bespeak the favour of Tiglath Pileser was regarded by him and accepted as tribute, which must be paid annually. Ahaz had exhausted his immediate resources, and in this difficulty he was obliged once more to despoil the Temple of some of its treasured possessions, making up the necessary sum—amongst other things—with the twelve bronze bulls upon which stood the celebrated " Sea " or basin for purification which Hiram the artist had cast for King Solomon, re-erecting the same upon a stone or marble pedestal instead.*

Ahaz died (*c.* 728 B.C.) soon after his voluntary submission to Assyria, leaving it to Hezekiah his son to guide the affairs of Judah through the critical period which immediately succeeded the fall of Samaria.

It may be imagined with what anxiety the movements of Sargon were watched when his army was once more free to take the field. Would he, or would he not, respect the treaty made with Judah by his predecessor? He was reported to be already in motion, marching toward the south, and few indeed doubted that Jerusalem itself was his objective, but he turned aside instead, and followed the coast route through Philistia to Gaza, which had dared to withhold its tribute, instigated thereto by Pharaoh Sabako,† who had come up out of Egypt to support his ally. Sabako, however, was defeated. Gaza was taken and Hanno, its king, slain; and Sargon, having fully attained the object of his enterprise, without further notice taken of Jerusalem, returned to his own land by the way that he came.

In Hezekiah the Lord had found a man after His own heart to sit upon the throne of David, a man of whom it is recorded that " he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David his father did." Himself an ardent follower of the Lord, and with a man like Isaiah for his chief adviser, Hezekiah was well qualified to initiate the root and branch religious reformation which he felt to be urgently necessary if he would, even yet, save Jerusalem from the impending penalty of its guilt. He was quick to attribute the fate of Israel to its true cause; and although he was unable to uproot the spirit of idolatry from the hearts of his people, he could at least, and he did, abolish its open practice.

He was the first to recognize the danger which lurked in the time-honoured

* It is evident, from the frequency with which the kings of Judah applied to the coffers of the Temple in times of financial difficulty, that the income of the Sanctuary was greater than its expenditure, and that large sums accumulated in its treasury. It is probable also that, as was the case elsewhere, the Temple was regarded as a sort of bank, or safe deposit, and that money withdrawn therefrom in emergency was repaid from future accumulations or by gifts of land.

† Or Shabaka, identified with So of 2 Kings, xvii. 4.

custom of worshipping Jehovah at the ancient "high-places," and in groves planted in His honour. There was nothing inherently wrong in so doing, but the outward resemblance between rites which were intended to have a purely spiritual and symbolic meaning, and the grossly materialistic worship of the gods of Canaan, rendered the transition from one to the other fatally easy, especially as the word "Baal," the proper name of the heathen deity, the stumbling-block of Israel, was in ordinary speech applied to Jehovah also, as the title of honour signifying "My Lord." As they had therefore become centres of the corruption of the true faith, Hezekiah removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves,* and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it. (2 *Kings*, xviii. 4.) For he said, "It is a mere piece of brass!"

Measures so drastic naturally aroused strong popular opposition, and it was not till many years later that the reform initiated by Hezekiah was fully carried out.

Of great importance, however, as a unifying influence, was the restoration of the public celebration in the Temple of the Feast of the Passover, which had been suffered to fall into abeyance, and to which the people came gladly from all parts of the country, some even from so far away as Zebulun and Asher. So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon there was not the like in Jerusalem. (2 *Chron.* xxx. 26.)

As a soldier, Hezekiah lost no time in strengthening to the utmost the fortifications of the capital. More efficient even than additional ramparts and towers were the means which he adopted for depriving a besieging force of an adequate supply of water. Lack of water had hitherto proved one of the city's best defences, but this was ten-fold increased when, in addition to choking all the wells and springs round about, Hezekiah covered with heavy masonry the fountain of Gihon which gushed from the rock immediately below the citadel, and led its copious overflow by a tunnel through the hill of Ophel, to be discharged into the pool of Siloam, thereby depriving an enemy of his chief water supply, and retaining the same for the need of the city.

For fourteen years Hezekiah continued to follow the counsels of Isaiah, who, having the most profound distrust of Egypt, urged the king to place reliance on the arm of the Lord alone, and to stand aloof from all plots and intrigues against the power of Assyria which took for granted and relied upon assistance from the south; but when Babylon, Phœnicia, and Philistia rose in revolt on the death of Sargon, Hezekiah, swayed by the influence of the Egyptian party in his council,

* From the rapidity with which "groves" could be replaced after destruction, it is evident that in these later days the word is applied also to some symbolic work of art—carved wooden pillars or masts; or possibly sacred "trees" similar to those so often represented in Assyrian sculptures.

PLATE No. 64

THE ASSYRIAN RABSHAKEH DEMANDING
THE SURRENDER OF JERUSALEM

was tempted to follow the example of his neighbours and to repudiate allegiance to Sennacherib, in spite of the strenuous opposition of the prophet, and his denunciation of policy which he knew to be disastrous. Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many . . . but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord! For thus saith the Lord God the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength. (*Isaiah*, xxxi. 1, xxx. 15.)

The hand of Sennacherib proved to be as strong as that of Sargon. He scattered the rebels of the north like chaff, and Hezekiah was thankful to purchase temporary safety by payment of a huge indemnity, in addition to the tribute which he had withheld. This arrangement having been made, and siege now laid to the stronghold of Lachish, it is difficult to see why Sennacherib should have sent back part of his army under three officers of high rank to demand the unconditional surrender of Jerusalem; unless for the reason that, having decided to extend his campaign into Egypt, he now recognized the danger of leaving so formidable a fortress, unreduced and disaffected, upon his line of communication.

In due time the envoys arrived, viz. the Tartan, or Commander-in-chief of Sennacherib's forces, the Rabsaris, chief of his princes, and the Rabshakeh, or chief captain. With their glittering staff they halted at the spot whence the waters of Gihon in former days flowed openly in "the conduit of the upper pool," and summoned the king to come out and receive the message with which they were entrusted. But when the three ministers of State whom Hezekiah sent instead requested that a matter of such importance should be discussed in private, or in the Syrian language, which was unknown to the people who thronged the battlements, the Rabshakeh contemptuously informed them that the more publicly the message was announced, the better; inasmuch as it affected the welfare of the people more than their rulers.

Then, in order that all might hear, he rode up the steep ascent, and addressing the people upon the wall in the Jewish tongue, advised them to put no trust in any hopes of deliverance which Hezekiah might hold out to them. Let them, he said, while there was yet time, submit themselves to the great king, the king of Assyria, who would remove them to a better land than their own, where they might live in ease and plenty. He pointed out the futility of resistance to a conqueror against whom the gods of the nations had contended in vain, that Jehovah Himself had failed to protect Samaria or any other of the cities of Israel or Judah, and was it likely that Jerusalem would prove a solitary exception? "But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not." (*Plate* 64.)

It was a day of dismay and mourning for the city. Were not the boasts of the Rabshakeh only too well justified? Right well did both king and people know the consequences to Jerusalem if resistance were offered, and offered in vain. In this hour of sore perplexity Hezekiah sought the Lord; and the Lord answered him by the word of Isaiah, who alone maintained unshaken his reliance on the will and power of Jehovah to protect, even in this dark hour, His faithful remnant and the honour of His Great Name. And Isaiah said unto the messengers whom Hezekiah had sent, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land. (2 *Kings*, xix. 6, 7.)

The confidence of the prophet imparted itself to the king and to his people, so that to the amazement of the Assyrian envoys, instead of receiving the submission of the city, they were bidden to return to their master with a letter of defiance. Busied at the time with another campaign, Sennacherib could do no more than repeat by letter his demand for an unconditional surrender. " And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the House of the Lord and spread it before the Lord " with supplications that He would grant such a deliverance that all kingdoms of the earth might know that Jehovah is the Lord and that there is none other. And as before, the Lord answered the prayer of His servant by the word of Isaiah, confirming His promise of protection and declaring that Sennacherib was but a tool in His hand to execute His will. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake. (2 *Kings*, xix. 33, 34.)

Never were the words of a prophecy more strikingly fulfilled. As the host of Assyria was advancing towards Pelusium, it was overwhelmed with swift and dire disaster, a pestilence apparently, which so decimated his army that Sennacherib was obliged to abandon the campaign, and with it his dreams of Empire on the Nile. Pausing only to gather up the army which lay encamped before Jerusalem, he retreated to the north, his march hastened by the " rumour " of which Isaiah had spoken, and which reached him on the way, of trouble and rebellion in his own land. After twenty years of anarchy and strife Sennacherib perished, as it had been foretold of him, in a revolt led by his two sons Adrammelech and Sharezer. (*c.* 701 B.C.)

Great was the rejoicing in Jerusalem at this escape from danger, profound the thankfulness of Hezekiah and Isaiah for God's great mercy in thus fulfilling His promise and delivering His people. But the yoke of the oppressor was not yet broken, the hated tribute had still to be paid, and Hezekiah listened,

not unfavourably, to suggestions of alliance, when envoys arrived from Berodach-Baladan, the revolted prince of Babylon, ostensibly to congratulate him on his recovery from sickness. Isaiah was roused to indignation when he heard of these overtures. Surely the recent great deliverance ought to have proved to Hezekiah wherein lay the strength of Judah, and Who was the one and only Ally to Whom they should look for protection! Though Babylon were to displace Assyria, might it not prove the sterner tyrant of the two? And Isaiah prophesied that this indeed would happen, and that one day the princes of the house of David would be palace slaves in Babylon.

XXX

A RELIGIOUS REVIVAL LED BY JOSIAH

THE death of Isaiah and Hezekiah (*c.* 686 B.C.) left Judah at this most critical period of her history with none either on the throne or in the Council chamber to carry on the traditional policy which Isaiah, her greatest reformer and statesman, had consistently advocated as that wherein lay the only hope of salvation for his countrymen. Being guided, however, by no fixed or lofty religious principle of action, but merely by one of material expediency, Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, caused, or suffered, his kingdom to lapse during the ensuing half-century into a condition of heathenism, worse by far than that from which it had recently been rescued.

There can be little doubt that the great Deliverance had a profound effect upon the popular imagination, but alas! the permanent result was nothing more than a superstitious belief that Jehovah had rendered His sanctuary inviolate. There was a minority of the population—that "remnant" of which Isaiah speaks—who were able to read aright the dealings of the Almighty, but for the rest, although Jehovah was nominally their God, they were still in that state of crude religious development when the measure of their faith in Him was that of His apparent power to grant material protection and prosperity.

Jerusalem alone, of all the cities from the Euphrates to the Nile, had withstood the power of Assyria. But elsewhere "the gods beyond the flood" had proved omnipotent, and Judah herself, like every other nation, furnished tribute to the conqueror. The splendidly disciplined and equipped legions of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal had become a familiar sight upon the roads of Palestine as they marched toward the south. Then followed evidence of victory; long trains of wagons returning laden with the rich spoils of Egypt, and multitudes of its deported inhabitants, and finally the news that Thebes itself had fallen.

Was the power of Jehovah comparable, after all, with that of the gods who had achieved success such as this for their votaries? In any case, it were surely wise to pay them due reverence and honour; for though it could not be denied that in former times Jehovah had wrought mighty deliverances for His people, in these latter days He seemed to have forgotten them.

Therefore the high places, together with the altars and Asheroth of the Baalim, which had been removed by Hezekiah, were again restored, and, encouraged perhaps by the approval of his suzerain or by some coincident prosperity, Manasseh followed up this first retrograde step by erecting altars to the

PLATE No. 265

THE SIN OF WITCHCRAFT

PLATE NO. 65
THE SIN OF WITCHCRAFT

" Host of Heaven," within the precincts of the Sanctuary itself, an act of daring impiety such as had never been dreamed of, much less perpetrated, by any previous king of Judah. And as if this did not suffice to fill to overflowing the cup of his iniquity, Manasseh made his son to pass through the fire . . . and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards. . . . And the Lord spake by His servants the prophets, saying, Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations . . . therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem, that whosoever heareth of it both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab . . . and I will forsake the remnant of Mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies because they have done that which was evil in My sight. (2 *Kings*, xxi. 6, 10, 12–15.) (*Plate* 65.)

And Manasseh shed much innocent blood in Jerusalem, doubtless the blood of those faithful witnesses, the prophets, and of others who, like them, had dared to lift their voice in protest against the iniquities of the time.

Amon the son of Manasseh followed in his father's footsteps, and, after a two years' reign, fell a victim to a court conspiracy, a crime which profited the conspirators nothing, as the rural population promptly avenged the king's death and made Josiah, a child eight years of age, king in his stead. (*c.* 639 B.C.)

What influence had been brought to bear upon him during his boyhood we do not know, but at an age when the young king was capable of thinking and acting for himself, we find Josiah responding readily to the preaching of the prophet Jeremiah, a priest of Anathoth, who was already stirring the hearts of the people by his fiery denunciations of the vice and idolatry of the city and of the nation.

The reforms of Josiah began on a sufficiently modest scale, being nothing more, in fact, than needful repairs of the Temple buildings, and the rightful allocation of the various funds at the disposal of the priests for the defrayment of expenses, as had been enacted by Joash two centuries before. But this matter-of-fact beginning had startling and important results; for while searching, probably, for these old accounts, Hilkiah the high-priest came upon a book of the Law which he had never seen before, and which, having glanced over, he lost no time in showing to Shaphan the king's scribe. Trembling and amazed at their discovery, they brought it to the king. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the Law, that he rent his clothes (2 *Kings*, xxii. 10, 11). Well might he do so, for while this book, which was evidently part, if not the whole of what is known as the book of Deuteronomy, contained much that was already familiar of the book of the Covenant, there were added thereto stern denunciations, not only of all toleration of heathen gods, but also of rites and observances in the Temple

worship itself, which, being based upon Canaanitish ritual, had incurred the penalties pronounced by Jehovah upon all such as practised them. But was the document authoritative?

The head of the prophetic guild at this time was one Huldah, a prophetess, who unhesitatingly pronounced in favour of its Divine inspiration, and, speaking herself in the Name of Jehovah, said, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: because they have forsaken Me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the work of their hands; therefore My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched (2 *Kings*, xxii. 16, 17): but the prophetess added that the personal innocence of the king, and his humiliation on account of the evil already wrought, had turned aside the immediate wrath of God so that the inevitable punishment should not fall in his day.

It may be that Josiah hoped that evidence of a sincere repentance and returning to the Lord on the part of the people might, even yet, avert calamity. He summoned the elders to meet him in the Temple, and there, standing in the Porch, he read aloud the newly-found Word of God, inviting all present to unite with him in making a Covenant before the Lord to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all their heart and with all their soul. . . . And all the people stood to the Covenant. (2 *Kings*, xxiii. 3.)

Alas! How often had similar vows been registered before—aye, and in that very place—under the influence of transient excitement, only to be broken when the testing-time came. Meanwhile, however, and as far as destructiveness went, the men of Jerusalem were enthusiastic reformers. Beginning with the Temple, they burned and destroyed everything connected with the worship of the host of heaven, the chariots of the sun which stood at the gates and the innumerable altars to the moon and planets and stars, whose presence and abominable rites had so long defiled the sacred precincts.

And Josiah caused also the " high places " round about Jerusalem, with their heathen temples, their " groves " or Asheroth, and idols, to be destroyed, and their places to be defiled and filled up with human bones. And Josiah did the like throughout the land even at the high places of Bethel and the cities of Samaria. And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them and returned to Jerusalem. . . . Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards . . . and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and Jerusalem did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law that were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord. (2 *Kings*, xxiii. 20, 24.) (*Plate* 66.)

Josiah marked the completion of this task of the purification of the land by

Plate No. 66

KING JOSIAH CLEANSING THE LAND OF IDOLS

keeping the Passover in Jerusalem in exact accordance with the ritual as laid down in this book of the Covenant. There had been no such Passover, says the historian, since the days of the judges. Nevertheless, he continues, the doom pronounced by Huldah the prophetess stood unrevoked; for all this lip and hand service indicated no change of heart, such as alone might have had power to work a corresponding change in the Divine purpose.

The authorship can but be surmised of the book which, by its stern monotheistic teaching, and insistence upon local concentration as an essential element of worship, was already exercising so great an influence upon the spirit of the national faith; but it would seem as if it were a voice calling from the grave of one of the martyrs who perished in the persecution of Manasseh, and who adopted this as the only method of delivering his message.

Josiah had no difficulty in carrying out the reformation which had been attempted without success by King Hezekiah. The political outlook had greatly changed within the last hundred years. At that time Assyria exercised, as we have seen, a dominating influence on the religion of Judah. The power of the Empire was then at its zenith, but began to wane shortly after the recovery of Thebes by Pharaoh Psammetik. It was found impossible to maintain in Egypt a force strong enough to keep the country in subjection, and the army of occupation was gradually withdrawn when Assyria itself was threatened with invasion by the Medes, a race of hardy mountaineers dwelling to the south of the Caspian Sea.

Their first assault was met and defeated by Assurbanipal, but Cyaxeres their king quickly reorganized his strength and forced the Assyrian army back upon Nineveh, which he was preparing to besiege, when hordes of barbarians from the steppes of Scythia swept through the passes of the Caucasus on to the open country of Media and Assyria, burning, slaying, and plundering as they went, and forcing Cyaxeres to raise the siege in the meantime, and look to his own defences. One of the waves of this great raid penetrated as far as to the borders of Egypt, but there it paused and retreated as swiftly as it had advanced, leaving Judah untouched save by the terror everywhere inspired by the very name of the Scythian invader.

Thus it will be seen that there was a period when Judah was practically exempt from foreign interference; and Josiah was free to work what reforms he pleased, not only in his own dominions, but farther north at Bethel and among the cities of Samaria.

XXXI

JUDAH INVADED BY EGYPTIAN AND BABYLONIAN ARMIES

ON the departure of the Scythians the siege of Nineveh was renewed by Cyaxeres, now strengthened by the forces of Nabopolassar the Chaldean, who, fifteen years before, had shaken off the suzerainty of Assyria and founded the last dynasty of the kings of Babylon. A combination so formidable was certain to achieve the ruin of Assyria, but Pharaoh Necho was not disposed to sanction a partition of the empire without asserting his claim to a share of the spoils. With this intention Necho took the field and marched northwards, consolidating as he went his hold upon the lands which had once owned the sway of Egypt and which more recently had been forced to acknowledge the overlordship of Assyria.

But Josiah had tasted too long the sweets of liberty to regard with equanimity the prospect of assuming once more the yoke of submission to a heathen master. He determined, therefore, to oppose the advance of Necho, fired doubtless by the belief that victory would secure freedom from the dread of Babylon as well, by rendering to its king a signal service at a critical time.

Josiah elected to encounter the enemy by the passage of Carmel (*c.* 608 B.C.), where the coast road by which he had advanced crosses the hill country, and emerges upon the plain of Esdraelon. There, at Megiddo, within sight of the fatal ridge of Gilboa, the armies met and Judah was crushingly defeated. No details of the battle are recorded, save the all-important one that Josiah was slain. Wounded by an arrow, he was brought in his chariot to Jerusalem, and there he died. (*Plate* 67.)

And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah with a sorrow far exceeding that generally accorded even to a popular monarch; for in truth his loss was irremediable. Apart from the affection which the people bore to their late king, Judah was left without a leader when the enemy stood at the gate with no one to forbid him entrance to the city which had been deemed inviolable. "And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead," but the choice was not pleasing to Necho, who deposed him and sent him captive to Egypt, placing upon the tributary throne his brother Eliakim instead, whose name he changed to Jehoiakim.

Confusion and dismay must have reigned in the minds and counsels of the priesthood and of the leaders of the people. They had destroyed the idols out of the land; even then they were engaged in re-casting the public worship of the Temple in accordance, as they believed, with the precepts of the Book of the

PLATE NO. 67
THE DEATH OF KING JOSIAH AT MEGIDDO

repentance and turning of the heart to God.

In the year 606 the mighty [illegible] assault of Media and [illegible] dispute with the latter [illegible] empire. He was [illegible] Nabopolassar, at [illegible] a defeat that [illegible] leaving the whole of Syria [illegible] victor.

The change of suzerainty [illegible]

it seemed good to the potter to [illegible] saying, O house of Israel, [illegible] Behold, as the clay is in the [illegible] Israel. . . . And at what instant I [illegible] a kingdom to build and to plant it; [illegible] of the good, [illegible] (Text 68.)

[illegible] warnings of Jeremiah [illegible] he was worthy of a traitor's [illegible] it, against this city. Such was the accusation [illegible] against him before the princes of Judah when they sat [illegible] the house of the Lord. Before this tribunal the [illegible]

PLATE NO. 68

JEREMIAH AND THE POTTER

Law: how came it then, that instead of a blessing attending their efforts, the Sanctuary of Jehovah was polluted by the presence of a heathen invader? And the answer came by the word of Jeremiah the prophet, even as it had been spoken to their forefathers by Isaiah, that burnt sacrifices and ceremonial were but symbols, valueless to appease the wrath of Jehovah unless accompanied by repentance and turning of the heart to God.

In the year 606 the mighty city of Nineveh succumbed at last to the combined assault of Media and Chaldea, and Pharaoh advanced from the Orontes to dispute with the latter power his claim to the Syrian dominions of the fallen empire. He was encountered by Nebuchadnezzar, the son and successor of Nabopolassar, at Carchemish on the upper Euphrates, and there suffered so overwhelming a defeat that he was forced to retreat within his own borders, leaving the whole of Syria and Palestine in the undisputed possession of the victor.

The change of suzerainty made little difference to Judah, king and people accepting with apathy the condition of servitude to which the nation was now accustomed. In spite of the reiterated warning of their faithful prophet, they drifted back to the worship of the gods of their heathen overlords, yet clung with superstitious pertinacity to a groundless trust in the inviolability of the Sanctuary of Jerusalem, and in their own security by virtue of its possession. Under the type of a potter whom he had seen shaping his vessel upon the wheel, Jeremiah proclaimed to the people the folly of this belief. The vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel as it seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in My hand, O house of Israel. . . . And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom to build and to plant it; if it do evil in My sight, that it obey not My voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them. (*Jer.* xviii. 4–6, 9–10.) (*Plate* 68.)

But the words and warnings of Jeremiah fell upon deaf ears. "The priests and prophets and all the people" with few exceptions were filled with rage against him, saying that he was worthy of a traitor's death for prophesying, as they called it, against this city. Such was the accusation which they brought against him before the princes of Judah when they sat in judgment in the court of the house of the Lord. Before this tribunal the patriot fearlessly repeated and justified his predictions, concluding his defence with these words: As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your

ears. (*Jer.* xxvi. 14, 15.) These solemn exhortations appealed to certain of the princes and of the elders who recalled to the memory of the assembly a parallel case, when Micah the prophet had uttered similar warnings in the days of Hezekiah; and when the king and all Judah, so far from putting Micah to death, had turned to the Lord in repentance. Jeremiah was accordingly acquitted, though another prophet, Urijah by name, was less fortunate and suffered martyrdom in the cause of truth.

Excluded from the Temple precincts, but determined nevertheless that if Judah must needs perish, it should not be able to plead ignorance of the Divine message, Jeremiah caused Baruch his attendant to write down his prophecies and to read them aloud in the hearing of the people of the land who thronged the courts on days of festival. Princes and people alike were filled with consternation when they listened to this arraignment, and to the doom pronounced against them and their city; but Jehoiakim was filled with fury against the prophet who, by his persistent and gloomy predictions, discouraged the people, and threatened to deprive him of their whole-hearted support in the rebellion which he was even then contemplating against the power of Babylon. To prevent the mischief going further, he therefore obtained and dared to destroy with his own hands the ominous roll of prophecy, and ordered the immediate arrest of both Baruch and his master; " but the Lord hid them."

This act of impiety convinced the prophet that the long-suffering of the Almighty had at length been exhausted, and that He had in deed and in truth withdrawn His mercy from the house of Judah; and accordingly, in the new roll of prophecy dictated to replace that which had been burnt, there is no longer to be read that element of conditional hope and mercy such as had characterized the former epistle, but, instead thereof, the uncompromising doom of the king and of the city which had neglected God's warnings and despised His salvation.

For three years after the accession of Nebuchadnezzar, Jehoiakim continued to pay tribute, but in the fourth year, for what reason can only be surmised, he had the folly to rebel; thereby bringing upon the land the penalty of invasion and the threatened siege of the capital itself. Marauding bands of Moabites, Syrians and Ammonites harried the country by the order or authority of their common overlord, nothing loth thus to pay off old scores against their hereditary enemy.

XXXII

Plate No. 69

THE SUBMISSION OF CONIAH TO
NEBUCHADNEZZAR

XXXII

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM AND THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH

IN the midst of confusion and terror Jehoiakim died and was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin (known also as Coniah), a lad of eighteen, who, as he reigned only three months, might surely have been spared the condemnation of the historian that "he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." Judah was without a leader; and when Nebuchadnezzar came up in person against the city, determined to break, once and for all, the spirit of this intractable province of Judah and such remnants of power as it still possessed, there was at the critical moment no possibility of organizing resistance, nor indeed of finding any alternative to unconditional surrender. This involved the bitterest public humiliation which had ever yet been inflicted upon a Hebrew king. Accompanied by his mother and the princes of his court, Coniah issued from the fatal northern gate of Jerusalem and ascended the rocky knoll overlooking the city, where doubtless the imperial pavilion was spread, and there, in the sight of both armies, and of his own people who thronged the walls, he kneeled with his forehead in the dust, submitting his head to the contemptuous pressure of the conqueror's heel. (*Plate* 69.)

In accordance with the usual Chaldean policy, Nebuchadnezzar deported the king and the chief men of the realm, together with a great proportion of the leading craftsmen and artisans of Jerusalem—all in fact who were likely to become good and useful citizens—to Chaldea, and established them there in a colony on the banks of the river Chebar.

And the king of Babylon made Mataniah, the uncle of Coniah, king in his stead and changed his name to Zedekiah. For four or five years Zedekiah was faithful to his oath of allegiance, but there was an under-current of discontent rife among the subject nations of Palestine. Secret envoys came and went to the court of Jerusalem, endeavouring to induce the king to assume the leadership of a coalition against Babylon, under promises of active support from Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt. Jeremiah, at first doubtful as to the Voice of God on this matter, heard it at last clearly and unmistakably uttered in favour of continued submission to the dominant power, even when Egypt, for once, was evidently bent upon fulfilling its promises of support.

The investment of Jerusalem by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar obliged Zedekiah to arrive at an instant decision before it was too late. With characteristic weakness and vacillation he endeavoured to make a compromise. He dared not

offend his own people by refusing the aid of Egypt, and he tried at the same time to propitiate the wrath of God by issuing an edict for the liberation of all of the Hebrew race who, contrary to the Deuteronomic Law, had hitherto been sold in slavery by their fellow-countrymen.

This policy seemed indeed to indicate promise of actual success. Hophra had no sooner taken the field than the Babylonians raised the siege of the city, leaving it to all appearance free once more to proceed upon its own evil way, but the inconceivable meanness and insincerity both of Zedekiah and his people were unmasked when it became apparent that, having attained their object, they had no intention of fulfilling their promise. The edict of freedom was revoked and the slaves remained in servitude. The people seem actually to have believed that they could thus deceive God Himself. Then came the word of the Lord unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel . . . Behold Pharaoh's army which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it and burn it with fire. Thus saith the Lord: Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men . . . yet should they rise up every man and burn this city with fire. (*Jer.* xxxvii. 6–10.)

Feeling that he could do nothing more for the safety of his beloved city, Jeremiah took advantage of the temporary lull in events to leave Jerusalem and retire to Anathoth: but he was arrested at the city gate and imprisoned on a false charge of treachery and desertion to the enemy. When, however, his enemies discovered that Jeremiah was still urging upon the people to flee from the doomed city if they would save their lives from the horrors of a protracted siege, the princes demanded his death; and he was accordingly let down into a disused cistern, half-filled with foul mud, where his end would speedily have been accomplished, but for the timely intercession of a negro officer of the court, who pleaded successfully with the king for the life of Jeremiah. So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken: and he was there when Jerusalem was taken. (*Jer.* xxxviii. 28.)

It was not long before Jeremiah's most sinister prophecies were amply fulfilled. The Egyptian army disappeared, never to return, and the Chaldeans re-occupied their formerly selected positions of assault. For no less than eighteen months did Jerusalem maintain a stout-hearted resistance and succeed in foiling every attempt of the enemy. As we have seen, only one-third or thereabouts of the ramparts were vulnerable, and there the fortifications had been so skilfully constructed, and the weapons of defence were so efficient, that the enemy failed to make a breach in the walls or effect a footing on their summit: and it seems evident that the city succumbed at last, less to lack of skill or courage

on the part of the defenders, than to actual [illegible] allies.

[illegible]hout the siege Jeremiah continued to urge [illegible] [illegible]er, as the only means of staving off utter destr[illegible] [illegible] and pestilence stared [illegible] king, with his [illegible] garrison, was forced [illegible] and scattered, and he was [illegible] had got farther than the [illegible] him up unto the king of Ba[illegible] judgment upon him. And [illegible] his eyes: and he slew also [illegible] the eyes of Zedekiah; and [illegible] bound him [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] great [illegible] from [illegible] from [illegible] being cut up or broken into [illegible]

[illegible] Nebuzar-adan took [illegible] death. (587 B.C.) [illegible] of G[illegible] of Jerusalem, and [illegible] the [illegible] thereof [illegible] escaped [illegible] carried [illegible] away to Babylon; [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

PLATE No. 70

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM BY NEBUZAR-ADAN

on the part of the defenders, than to actual famine and the treachery of its allies.

Throughout the siege Jeremiah continued to urge upon the king the necessity of surrender, as the only means of staving off utter destruction from the city and from the Sanctuary. Zedekiah, however, feared the fanatical enthusiasm of his own people more even than the sword of the enemy, and he continued to resist, long after resistance was worse than useless. The end came when death by famine and pestilence stared them in the face. The king, with his gaunt, hunger-stricken garrison, was forced to abandon Jerusalem and endeavoured by a night sortie to effect his escape into the land of Gilead. Needless to say his force was overtaken and scattered, and he was himself a captive in the hands of the enemy before he had got farther than the plain of Jericho. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him. And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: and he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.* (*Jer.* lii. 9–11.)

Then Nebuchadnezzar sent Nebuzar-adan, his "Tartan," to complete the destruction of the city. He was well aware of the danger of leaving intact so strong a fortress in an imperfectly subjugated country, a fortress which was at the same time the Sanctuary of the nation. All the sacred vessels of gold and silver belonging to the Temple had, of course, been carried away by Nebuchadnezzar in the first captivity, and were now in the treasure-houses of Babylon, but much remained of value of the bronzes of Hiram of which so much has been related—the great pillars of the porch, the Molten Sea, lavers and chaldrons of brass both from the Temple and from the king's houses, those that were too cumbrous being cut up or broken into portable fragments.

And Nebuzar-adan took seventy of the leaders of those who had been left, including the high priest, and sent them to the king at Riblah, where they were put to death. (587 B.C.) And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire . . . And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil three score and ten years. (2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 19–21.) (*Plate* 70.)

Who that had taken part in the siege, and who now stood by the wayside of the north road on that fatal night watching the unhappy stream of exiles as they

* An exact fulfilment of two prophecies which were apparently contradictory.—*Jer.* xxxiv. 3. "Thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon and thou shalt go to Babylon." "I will bring him to Babylon, yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there."—*Ezek.* xii. 13.

defiled forth from the gate by the fitful glare of the burning city, could have supposed that this was ought else than the closing scene in the life of a nation; that the power and influence of the kingdom of Judah and the very identity of Israel as that of a separate people had already passed away? Yet Jehovah was utilizing what, with any other people, would have seemed nothing short of extinction as a means to a great end—one more phase in the trial and discipline of the Nation, whereby, having been shaped upon the wheel of prosperity and found wanting, it was now being re-moulded by the Master's hand the better to adapt it to be the vessel of God's beneficent purpose to mankind.

XXXIII

PALESTINE UNDER THE BABYLONIANS

THESE wholesale deportations had left the country practically depopulated of any but the poorer classes; the cities being without inhabitant, while in the country districts were only to be found isolated village communities of vine-dressers and farm labourers, too few in number and too impoverished to keep the land in proper cultivation, and which was thus obliged to "enjoy," as the prophet calls it, its prolonged and unprofitable sabbath.

Over this sparse population Nebuzar-adan established Gedaliah as governor, a man of rank whose character for integrity and uprightness had made him so universally respected that the choice was most welcome to those who knew him best. Many of the bands of broken soldiery who had fled to the open country on the fall of Jerusalem, and many fugitives also to the countries east of Jordan, returned when they heard of the appointment of Gedaliah, and were urged by him to occupy and possess the rich land, accepting the yoke of Babylon which had been laid upon them by God, but which would not be found heavy to bear. And Gedaliah . . . sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. As for me, behold I will dwell at Mizpah to serve the Chaldeans which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine and summer fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken. (*Jer.* xl. 9, 10.)

Jeremiah, who had always advocated a similar policy with regard to submission, had earned the favour of Nebuzar-adan. He had been granted choice of residence, and he accordingly elected to remain at Mizpah where he believed he might be able to strengthen the hands of the governor.

All promised well for a short time, but among the captains who came with their men to submit themselves to Gedaliah was a certain Ishmael of the blood royal who had taken refuge with Baalis, king of Ammon, and who now came at his patron's instigation and in his interests, though protesting his loyalty to the provincial government. Gedaliah was warned of this man's treachery by Johanan and others of the military leaders, but in vain. His rash confidence gave Ishmael his opportunity to murder Gedaliah and all the Jews who were with him and also the Chaldeans who formed his bodyguard. By similar treachery Ishmael slew representatives from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria who came seeking Gedaliah, and then completed his nefarious plot by carrying off all the

people in Mizpah including the daughters of the king. His triumph was short-lived, however. He was followed by Johanan together with other leaders, overtaken near Gibeon, and defeated. Ishmael escaped to the Ammonites, and Johanan for greater safety led the people whom he had delivered from his hand to settle near Bethlehem, whence they could more easily escape to Egypt.

Profoundly perplexed as to the future, the leaders and the people together consulted Jeremiah, and besought him to inquire of the Lord what they should do, promising that whether it be good or evil, we will obey the Voice of Jehovah our God to Whom we send you, that it may be well with us when we obey the Voice of Jehovah our God. (*Jer.* xlii. 6.) After ten days Jeremiah gave the reply: If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not pluck you up. For I am sorry for the evil that I have done to you. On the other hand, if ye have indeed determined to enter into Egypt and go to sojourn there, then shall the sword which ye fear overtake you there in the land of Egypt: and the famine, of which ye are afraid, press hard upon you there in Egypt, so that ye shall die there. (*Jer.* xlii. 10–17.)

The prophet evidently read in the minds of the people a determination to seek safety in Egypt, and his anticipation was only too well grounded. For Johanan and Azariah and "all the proud men" repudiated their promise, charging Jeremiah with being the tool of Baruch, and forthwith led a migration of "all the remnant of Judah who had returned" to seek a new home in Egypt: and they carried off with them, doubtless as unwilling hostages, the prophet Jeremiah and Baruch his friend.

At Tahpanhes, at Migdol, at Memphis, and in Upper Egypt these Jews found a settlement. But the prophet, whom they had forced to accompany them, remained true to his office. By symbol and by speech he proclaimed the coming doom of Egypt itself, through invasion by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, so that the Jews who had fled thither would meet an even worse fate than they feared. For I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by famine and by pestilence, so that none of the remnant of Judah, who have gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or be left to return to the land of Judah; for none shall return except fugitives. (*Jer.* xliv. 14.) As a sign of the certainty of their fate the Jews were to see Pharaoh Hophra, the king of Egypt, fall into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, even as Zedekiah had done.

Henceforward, the hope of the Jewish race was confined to those who had been deported into Babylonia. Many of these had allowed themselves to settle down as if Babylonia were to be their home, loosening their hold upon their old traditions and customs, and even upon the faith of their fathers. But throughout the period of nearly seventy years during which the Captivity lasted, there was

PLATE No. 71
CAPTIVITY IN BABYLON

always a " remnant " of those who never forgot Jerusalem, who nourished their faith and hope on the promises of restoration. They composed psalms like the 137th :—

By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
We hanged our harps
Upon the willows in the midst thereof.
For they that carried us away captive desired of us a song;
And they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying,
Sing us one of the songs of Zion.
How shall we sing the Lord's song
In a strange land? (*Ps.* cxxxvii. 1–4.) (*Plate* 71.)

In those who bore the miseries of exile, exile from their fatherland and exile from the presence of God, with patience and submission and with unfaltering faith, the great prophet of the Exile saw a true pre-figuring of a Suffering Servant Whose submission and sacrifice would avail to justify many. But the generation that had been deported from Palestine had died out, and even the one which followed it was greatly thinned before the dawn of hope broke across the vision of the exiled people. The voice of the same prophet proclaimed its coming : Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned : for she hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins. (*Isaiah*, xl. 1, 2.)

XXXIV

DANIEL IN BABYLON

IN the year 606 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar invaded Syria, and having routed the Egyptian armies at Carchemish, he proceeded to Jerusalem, rifled the temple, and carried off to Babylon certain Hebrew nobles, who were subsequently trained for the king's service at the Babylonian court.

The most gifted of these royal captives was Daniel, whose three companions were named by the Babylonians, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. It was whilst they were holding high positions at the king's court that Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream which so greatly troubled him, that his wise men were ordered to recall the details he had forgotten, and produce the interpretation thereof or suffer instant destruction.

Daniel saved the helpless magicians by an interview he obtained with the monarch, and immediately summoned his three friends to join him in seeking from God the required revelation of the king's dream. In answer to their prayers he was able to unravel the mystery of the king's vision of the night, and he disclosed to Nebuchadnezzar its remarkable significance. So greatly impressed was the king by Daniel's inspired wisdom, that besides offering him costly presents and an oblation of sweet odours, he appointed Daniel viceroy of the province of Babylon, and accorded high honours likewise to Daniel's three companions. (*Plate* 72.)

Although Nebuchadnezzar had thus acknowledged the power of Daniel's God, he subsequently deemed it expedient to appoint a great festival at which all his subject peoples should render homage to the Babylonian god Marduk. To this end a huge golden image was set up in the plain of Dura, and the king's proclamation ordered all men to prostrate themselves as soon as the music was sounded. Daniel's three friends persisted in their refusal to acknowledge the monarch's god or bow before his image, and so, in accordance with the royal decree, they were bound hand and foot and cast into a burning, fiery furnace. The king's captains, who obeyed his behest, fell victims to the flames, but the three servants of Jehovah walked unscathed in the midst of the fire, accompanied by a Divine deliverer whom Nebuchadnezzar declared to be a Son of God. Amazed at their miraculous preservation, he bade them come forth, and at once issued another decree that all men should worship none other than the Hebrews' God. (*Dan.* iii. 16–29.)

Some time after this the great king was once more distracted by a vision which Daniel alone could interpret. It solemnly predicted the monarch's doom

PLATE No. 72

DANIEL INTERPRETS THE DREAM OF
NEBUCHADNEZZAR

if he persisted in his impenitence and pride. Twelve months later the calamity overtook him, and only after some years of humiliation did his reason return to him, and he blessed the Most High God.

Nebuchadnezzar's remarkable career came to an end in 561 B.C., after a reign of forty-three years. Three kings successively reigned for a brief period at Babylon before Belshazzar began to share the government of the country with his father Nabonadius. This young prince was feasting one day with a thousand nobles and desecrating the sacred vessels that were taken from the temple in Jerusalem, when suddenly a mysterious hand began to write upon the enamelled wall of the banqueting hall. Belshazzar was terrified, and his queen advised him to send for Daniel, who came and rebuked the king for his profanity, interpreting also the strange words as a message of doom from the God of Heaven. The aged prophet's prediction was quickly fulfilled, for that very night Belshazzar was slain, when Cyrus, king of Persia, entered the city of Babylon in the year 538 B.C.

The captured city was entrusted by Cyrus to Darius, the Mede,* who appointed as chief president of the governors the venerable Daniel, now over eighty years of age. The jealousy of these provincial rulers led them to inform Darius of Daniel's steadfast habit of praying three times daily, in defiance of the king's decree that no one should offer any petition for thirty days to god or man except to Darius himself. Not even the king could save Daniel from the penalty of breaking his irrevocable laws, and the nobles rejoiced when the aged prophet was cast into a den of lions. The king, however, passed a sleepless night, and early in the morning he hurried to the lions' den, to find that Jehovah had protected His faithful servant and His angel had shut the lions' mouths. Overjoyed at this deliverance Darius gave orders that Daniel should be taken up, that his detractors should be hurled into the den of lions, and that all men should pay adoration to none but Daniel's God. Thus was God's good Providence constantly manifested to the great comfort of the Jewish remnant in the land of their exile.

* Darius—considered by Josephus and others to be the son of Astyages—Cyaxares II, the last king of Media and uncle of Cyrus, king of Persia, who inherited his crown at his death. Others claim that Astyages was the last king of the Medes, who left no male issue, and that this Darius was, therefore, Astyages; while Rawlinson and others consider this Darius was a viceroy set over Babylon by Cyrus. He must be distinguished from Darius Hystaspes of Ezra, vi. 15; Haggai, i. 1; and Zechariah, i. 1.

XXXV

THE RETURN FROM EXILE AND REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

THE invincible conviction that God would yet intervene for the deliverance of His people, the resounding challenge to the gods of the other nations which rings through the later chapters of Isaiah, may have been quickened into exalted expression by dramatic changes in the political relations of Israel's conqueror. The kingdom of Babylon had fallen. Babylon itself had been occupied by a conqueror of an alien race. The fate of the Jews and of other peoples who had been subjected by Assyria was now in the hand of Cyrus (538 B.C.), and in Cyrus the believing Jews thought that they saw the deliverer raised up by God. Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him. . . . I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. . . . For Jacob My servant's sake and Israel Mine elect I have even called thee by thy name; I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me. (*Isaiah*, xlv. 1, 2, 4.)

Neither did Cyrus disappoint this high expectation. He had hardly been king of Babylon for a year when he issued a decree for the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem. In the reign of Darius, nearly twenty years later, search was made in " the house of the rolls," and the decree was found: In the first year of Cyrus the king, the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid. . . . And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem. (*Ezra*, vi. 3–5.)

Such a decree carried with it permission for the Jews who were so disposed, to return to their native land. And we are told that then rose up the heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. (*Ezra*, i. 5.) Neither did they return empty-handed. For Cyrus caused to be brought out of the Babylonian temple the vessels of gold and vessels of silver which Nebuchadnezzar had carried off from Jerusalem, and delivered them into the care of Sheshbazzar, whom he had appointed governor, to be brought back to Zion. (*Plate* 73.)

The number of those who actually returned at this time was probably not

Plate No. 73
THE RETURN OF THE EXILES

very large, but they united themselves to such fragments of the people as had remained and survived in the Holy Land; and under the inspiration of Jeshua son of Jozadak, and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, they built again the altar of God and again offered upon it the customary sacrifices. The work of rebuilding the Temple began in the second year of the Return, and was the occasion of great rejoicing not unmingled with sorrow for the glory of the past. All the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted for joy. (*Ezra*, iii. 11, 12.)

The rejoicing was, however, premature. The foundations may have been laid, but the erection of the Temple was not carried very far. For dissension broke out between the "children of the captivity" and the "people of the land." The latter claimed, as also worshippers of Jehovah, to take a share in the building; and when Zerubbabel and Jeshua repudiated the claim, they became hostile to the enterprise, and began to intrigue against the Jews at the court of Cyrus. Thus the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building; and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia even until the reign of Darius king of Persia. (*Ezra*, iv. 4, 5.)

It was when Darius was king, and nearly sixteen years later, that the work was again taken in hand with vigour. The inspiration this time came from the prophet Haggai, whose words stung the conscience of the people. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of Hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough . . . and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. . . . Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. (*Hag.* i. 3–8.)

Haggai was supported by Zechariah, and together they persuaded Jeshua and Zerubbabel and the rest of the people to resume work on the Temple (520 B.C.). The good progress they were making aroused the suspicion of the Persian authorities, who demanded by whose permission they were rebuilding the Temple, and thereafter sent a report of their activities to Darius to the effect that the Jews claimed to be acting on permission which had been granted to them by Cyrus. The king caused search to be made in the archives of Babylon, and when the decree of Cyrus had been brought to light, dispatched orders to the governor and those under him to "let the work of this house of God alone." Not content with thus condemning the opposition, the king insisted on

carrying out the spirit of the decree of Cyrus, ordering that assistance should be given to the Jews both in money and material. So encouraged and so assisted, the building of the Temple proceeded apace, until it was completed in the sixth year of Darius (516 B.C.).

The dedication of the restored Temple was celebrated with great joy, and shortly afterwards the whole body of returned exiles kept the Passover with all the ancient care and ceremonial.

Plate No. 74
NEHEMIAH MAKES HIS PETITION TO
ARTAXERXES

XXXVI

THE RESETTLEMENT OF THE PEOPLE UNDER NEHEMIAH AND EZRA

THERE followed an interval of nearly seventy years, during which a veil falls over the history of the Jews. When it lifts again, Darius has been succeeded by Xerxes, and Xerxes by Artaxerxes. The battles of Marathon and of Salamis have been fought. The condition of Jerusalem and of the Jews dwelling there is revealed through the memoirs of a noble and patriotic Jew, Nehemiah, who occupied an important position at the court of Artaxerxes. He was at Shushan in the palace when news reached him through Hanani, one of his relatives, that " the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall also of Jerusalem is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire." (*Neh.* i. 3.) Nehemiah was so deeply moved by this intelligence, that for some days he mourned and fasted, making earnest prayer to God that He would forgive the iniquity of His people: Now these are Thy servants and Thy people, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy great power. O Lord, I beseech Thee, let now Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant; and prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. (*Neh.* i. 10, 11.) For Nehemiah had made up his mind to appeal to the king. (*Plate* 74.)

He was the king's cupbearer, and when he was serving him with wine, the king marked the sadness of his face, and inquired the reason. On being told that it was because " the place of my fathers' sepulchres lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed by fire," the king gave Nehemiah leave to proceed to Judah, under promise to return; and gave him also orders to the governor and to the keeper of the king's forest that they should assist him. So he came to Jerusalem, attended by an escort provided by the king. His first care was to examine for himself the condition of the city, its walls and gates. His investigation was made alone and by night, when he rode out through one gate after another, and then explored the wall in the neighbourhood of the gate. When the inspection was complete, he called together the priests and nobles, and said to them: Ye see the distress we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates are burned with fire: come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. (*Neh.* ii. 17.)

Nehemiah's appeal met with a quick response. In spite of certain threatenings from disaffected inhabitants, such as Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah

the Ammonite slave, the priests and rulers distributed the necessary work into sections, and undertook each one of them his section of the wall, and thus rapid progress was made. But the enemies of the work who had first poured scorn on the undertaking, saying, " If a fox should go up on it, he would break down their stone wall," began to take alarm when they saw the energy with which it was being prosecuted. Taking to themselves other enemies of the Jews :—Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites, Sanballat and Tobiah resolved to stop the work by force of arms. Despair also seized some of the workers. The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. (*Neh.* iv. 10.)

Nehemiah met this double danger with great firmness. He set the people by families behind the rising walls, armed with swords and spears and bows, and charged them : Remember the Lord, Which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives and your houses. (*Neh.* iv. 14.) So they returned to the work, and while half of them held the weapons for defence, the other half worked at the building, and even they had their swords girded to their sides, and so builded. A trumpeter was provided to summon help to any part of the wall that might be attacked. So (says Nehemiah) neither I, nor my kinsmen, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard who accompanied me, not one of us took off our clothes, each had his spear in his hand. (*Neh.* iv. 23.) (*Plate* 75.)

Meanwhile, the wisdom of Nehemiah was tested and shown in another direction. Some unpatriotic Jews had taken advantage of their poorer brethren, by lending them money to buy food or to pay taxes, upon mortgage of their lands and vineyards; even their children fell into the hands of the usurers as pledges for debt. Nehemiah was righteously indignant when he heard of this, and challenged the self-seeking notables, saying, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold to the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? (*Neh.* v. 8.) And they were conscience-stricken at his reproach, and agreed to his demand that they should restore the lands and the vineyards they had seized, and also the hundredth part of the money. And Nehemiah took an oath of them that they would act towards their poorer brethren as those who had participated in a common redemption.

Nehemiah himself set an example of patriotic concern for the people over whom he was set. For, whereas previous governors had expected and received payment from the people both in money and in kind, Nehemiah throughout the twelve years of his governorship took no pay. On the other hand, he kept open table for many, both Jews and foreigners, for whom he made liberal provision.

The walls of the city being now completed, although the gates were not yet set up, the enemies of Nehemiah began again to bestir themselves. They laid a plot against him, inviting him time and again to meet them in the country, that

Plate No. 75
REBUILDING THE WALL OF JERUSALEM
UNDER NEHEMIAH

they might murder him. When he replied, " I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down," they tried to entrap him into the Temple for the same purpose. But neither this kind of plotting nor the charge of setting himself up as an independent king deceived Nehemiah. He would neither meet his enemies nor take to flight. Should such a man as I flee, and who is there, that being as I am, would go into the Temple to save his life? (*Neh.* vi. 11.) The difficulties of the position were added to by disloyalty on the part of some of the notables within the city, who kept up correspondence with Tobiah and undermined the influence of Nehemiah. But in spite of all, the work went on, and in fifty-two days the walls of Jerusalem were completed, the gates set up, and the city made secure against attack.

The success which had so far attended Nehemiah's efforts to restore the city now led to organized opposition on the part of the Persian authorities in Palestine. They united together to present a remonstrance and warning to Artaxerxes the king, pointing out that the city, the walls of which had now been rebuilt, had been notorious as " a base and rebellious city," and that if it should be completely restored, the king would be in danger of losing the whole province together with the revenues he drew from it. Possibly in order to counteract the effect of this appeal, Nehemiah appears to have quitted Jerusalem at this time, and returned to Persia. Before doing so, he appointed Hanani his brother, and Hananiah to take command of the city, giving careful instructions for its being watched and defended. For though the wall of it was large and great, " the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded." The population was indeed so inadequate to defend the city that a levy was made of the dwellers in the country, and one-tenth of them was moved into Jerusalem. (*Neh.* xi. 1, 2.) A solemn service of thanksgiving was then held for the dedication of the walls. Two processions started from the same point in opposite directions, and made a circuit of the city, until they met again, and then joined in joyful sacrifice. For God had caused them to rejoice with great joy; the women also and the children rejoiced : so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off. (*Neh.* xii. 43.)

Having thus done all he could to protect the work during his absence, Nehemiah returned to Persia, but there he met with a check. The memorial from the local authorities in Palestine had succeeded in raising suspicion at the court. The records were searched and were held to confirm the charge that Jerusalem had been a rebellious city. Any influence that Nehemiah had was exercised in vain; and the reply of the king was only too definite : Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that the city be not builded, until commandment shall be given by me. (*Ezra*, iv. 21.)

Although further progress in the building of the city was thus stopped, the community appears to have been left unmolested. After an absence of uncertain duration Nehemiah is found again in Jerusalem (432 B.C.), and acting once more

as governor. His principal task now is to deal with internal abuses which had crept in. Eliashib the priest had prepared a private residence for himself within the sacred chambers of the Temple; the tithes had not been properly paid, and the Levites had been compelled to desert the service of the sanctuary, and seek a livelihood on the land; the Sabbath was being profaned; and inter-marriages between Jews and women of other races were becoming so common that the children were growing up in ignorance of the Jewish tongue, and speaking strange languages. With these abuses Nehemiah dealt firmly and successfully, and at the end of his career had re-established a community which was ordered according to the Law.

Some thirty years later, when another Artaxerxes was king of Persia, a still larger body of Jews returned from Babylonia to their native land. The leader of this second Return was Ezra. He was known and honoured as " the Scribe "—the man learned in and zealous for the Law of Moses. He had it in his heart to seek the Law of Jehovah, and to observe it. and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances. (*Ezra*, vii. 10.)

Like Nehemiah, Ezra had permission from the king to take with him any of the Jews who were willing to go; moreover, he was authorized to receive gifts from the king, the nobles, and the people, for the enrichment of the Temple, and given authority to appoint judges and magistrates in the land. When the returning exiles had assembled near the river Ahava* and care had been taken to secure the presence of representatives of the tribe of Levi, Ezra proclaimed a fast, to seek from God a prosperous journey. For I was ashamed to ask of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on the journey, because we had spoken to the king, saying, The hand of our God is with all them that seek Him for good, but His power and His wrath is against all them who forsake Him. So we fasted and besought our God for this, and He was entreated by us. (*Ezra*, viii. 21–23.)

The journey was long, but untroubled by attack. All the treasure and the sacred vessels, which had been entrusted to sure hands, were delivered to the Temple authorities at Jerusalem; and great sacrifices were offered in thanksgiving for this glorious Return. Then the people dispersed to find homes for themselves in Jerusalem and the country round about.

When the resettlement was complete there was a great assembly of the people, who met in the open space outside the Western Gate. And there, at the request of the people, Ezra began to read to them the Law of Moses. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, and when he opened it all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed Jehovah the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, while they lifted up their hands and bowed their heads, and worshipped Jehovah with their faces to the ground. And Ezra the

* By the modern town of Hît, on the Euphrates.

priest " the Scribe," and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God; mourn not nor weep. For all the people wept when they heard the words of the Law. Then said he unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared : for this day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. (*Neh.* viii. 5–6, 9–10.) And the people did as they were commanded.

The reading of the Law went on from day to day; and when the people heard the commandment concerning the Feast of Tabernacles, they proceeded with great joy to celebrate it, going forth and bringing boughs and branches from the woods, out of which they built booths upon the house-tops, and they sat under them, as had not been done in Israel since the days of Joshua.

But the conscience also of the people had been stirred by hearing in the Law the commandment that the children of Israel should keep their race pure by abstaining from marriage with surrounding peoples. And their representatives came to Ezra with the confession that this law had been widely broken by high and low. Ezra, overwhelmed with shame and sorrow at this falling away, " sat astonied till the evening sacrifice," and then made confession to God of this sin of the people. The people, deeply moved, entered into an undertaking to put away their foreign wives. And thus the new community of the Jews was established on a basis of racial purity and distinction from the nations around. It only remained to confirm this by a solemn covenant. The people having " separated themselves from all strangers " assembled together, and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And Ezra, in their name, rehearsed before God the long story of Divine goodness, of human disobedience and Divine forbearance, which was the core of the history of Israel. And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it, and our princes, Levites, and priests seal it. (*Neh.* ix. 38.)

When this covenant had been sealed by all the chiefs of the people, then all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto their God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, gave in their adhesion, and entered into an oath to walk in God's Law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and His judgments and His statutes. (*Neh.* x. 28, 29.)

The history of the Old Testament thus comes to a close, leaving a people which had been through the fires of affliction, and had come forth with a faith unshakable in God, and in the Oneness of God, committed to walk according to the Law which had been given by Moses, and cherishing deep in its heart the hope of a Deliverance yet to come, even greater than all that which it had already known.

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